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What's the Use?

By Dr. Frank Crane

A SKULL and cross-bones, and underneath the device: "What's the Use?" That is the dark flag flying at the head of the hosts of Despair.

"What's the use?" says the girl. She is tired of trying. Every circumstance seems a push of Fate. The arts of bad men and the indifference of good, the heartlessness of women, and the persistence of evil luck—all combine against her. She takes "the easiest way."

The bank clerk yields, embezzles; the ex-convict struggles awhile to be straight, and gives up; the harassed wife turns to betrayal; the bankrupt merchant flees by the way of suicide. "What's the use?" they say.

It is the coward's question. It is the pusillanimous whine of the weakling. It is the despicable excuse of the traitor.

For there is always Use. If you have failed, it is only that you are to succeed in a better way, if you will. If you have done folly, it is that out of it shall come a maturer wisdom. If you have sinned, it is that by repentance and reformation you shall enter into a more human, a warmer purity.

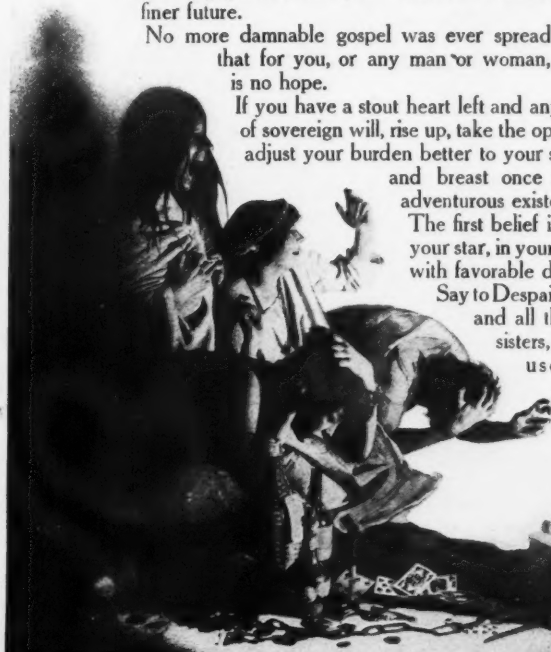
The one great teaching that runs through all religions is that we may step upon our dead selves, and make our faulty past be the stairs whereon to climb to a finer future.

No more damnable gospel was ever spread than that for you, or any man or woman, there is no hope.

If you have a stout heart left and any piece of sovereign will, rise up, take the open road, adjust your burden better to your shoulders, and breast once more this adventurous existence.

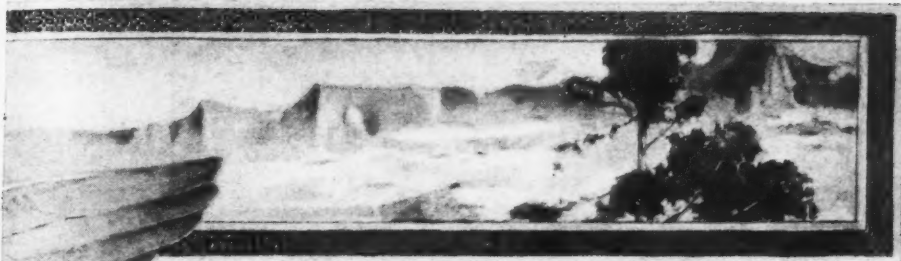
The first belief is a belief in your star, in your partnership with favorable destiny.

Say to Despair and Gloom and all their maudlin sisters, "What's the use?" And rise up and come away!





DRAWING BY VINCENT ADREENTE



The Invisible Helpers

By Ella Wheeler Wilcox

THERE are, there are
Invisible Great Helpers of the race.
Across unatlased continents of space,
From star to star,
In answer to some soul's imperious need,
They speed, they speed.

When the earth-loving young are forced to stand
Upon the border of the Unknown Land,
They come, they come—those angels who have trod
The altitudes of God,
And to the trembling heart
Their strength impart.

Have you not seen the delicate young maid,
Filled with the joy of life in her fair dawn,
Look in the face of death, all unafraid,
And smilingly pass on?

This is not human strength; not even faith
Has such large confidence in such an hour.
It is a power
Supplied by beings who have conquered death.
Floating from sphere to sphere
They hover near
The souls that need the courage they can give.

This is no vision of a dreamer's mind.
Though we are blind
They live, they live,
Filling all space—
Invisible Great Helpers of the race.



DRAWN BY GEORGE GIBBE

Amaldi, who had stood just behind Sophy, came forward. She looked up at him, with the smile that she had given Varesca just touching her lips. It melted suddenly away as she met Amaldi's eyes

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(Shadows of Flames)

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Shadows of Flames*

A STUDY IN IMPERFECTION

By Amélie Rives

Author of "The Quick or the Dead," "World's End," etc.

Illustrated by George Gibbs

SOPHY smiled at her image in the dark pool of the mirror, and her gray eyes smiled back at her. The shadows under them, warm, golden stains like those on a bruised magnolia leaf, gave them a mysterious, impassioned look. She felt that she was going to have a happy evening.

In those days, in the early '90s, electric light was not much used in the houses in Regent's Park. Candles in brass sconces, on either side of the mirror, lighted Sophy's dressing-table. They brought out soft, flickering shimmers from her gown of white satin, brocaded in palm leaves. Sleeves were full that year. The soft transparent masses of deep azalea pink, drooping on either side of her slender body in its white-satin sheath, made it look slenderer. These sleeves were like huge orchids, and from them her arms drooped, waxen, stamenlike, in the soft, gold wash from the candles.

Matilda, her little Kentish maid, could not keep her eyes away from her. She was hooking the long, tightly wound sash of azalea-pink crêpe under Sophy's lifted arm, but she kept peering under it at her lady's image in the mirror.

"Oh, m'm, you do look be-oot-i-ful!" she murmured.

"Thank you, Tilda," said Sophy. She touched the girl's plump, dog-rose cheek with her finger-tips.

"What blue eyes you have, Tilda!" said

Sophy. "Even in the candle-light they are as blue as Reckett's sign on the 'buses.'"

"Oh, m'm!" breathed Tilda, overcome. Then she rose from her knees.

"What jools, m'm?" she asked demurely, standing before the small, velvet-lined box that held her mistress' few jewels.

"Just the pearls," said Sophy.

Tilda looked at her, timidly remonstrative. "Nothing on your hair, m'm?"

"I think not."

"But the crown of teeny diamonds is so lovely on your hair, m'm—like a rime of 'oar frost.'"

Sophy considered, looking at the curve of her head from different points in a little hand-glass. Then she said firmly,

"No; just the pearls to-night."

Her hair was dressed simply, in the loveliest way that a woman with a beautifully shaped head can wear it—drawn softly over the arched crown and folded into a big, shining knot low at the back. Sophy's hair was the color of a ripe horse-chestnut, or a breadth of veined mahogany—dark and brown-red in shaded streaks. It waved very slightly and irregularly. About her brow and temples it grew in soft points, melting into a goldish down. Her eyebrows were darker than her hair, long, slender, and straight. Her eyelashes were quite black. When she laughed or smiled, her eyes, too, grew long and slender. But the most striking thing about her was her look of luminos-

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ity, especially at night. She had that kind of golden, fair skin that looks as though a light were glowing through it.

She took the pearls from the gray-velvet tray that Tilda held out to her, and fastened them about her throat. It was not a long string, but the pearls were large and very perfect—the three colors swam on them as in a milky prism. They had been her wedding-gift from her brother-in-law, Lord Wychcote. Poor Gerald! She was fond of him. He was the only one of the family who had been really nice to her. Yes, they were fond of each other. She touched the cold, heavy pearls as they lay above the pulse in her throat, and thought pityingly of his dark eyes so often full of pain. Then she thought of how Cecil sometimes spoke brutally to him, and she shivered.

"A goose on your grave, m'm!" said Tilda. "Let me fetch a scarf."

She brought a scarf of old lace, delicate as the skeleton of an elm leaf left by caterpillars, and threw it over Sophy's shoulders. Then handed her her fan, gloves, and handkerchief, and taking the white evening cloak on her arm, waited for her mistress to leave the room.

Sophy gave a last look over her shoulder as she turned from the mirror. Yes; she liked the silken curve of her head, unbroken by any ornament—besides, she did not wish to wear anything that Cecil had given her, to-night. The pink-and-white gown that so became her was three years old—had been part of her trousseau. She had had it remodeled in the house by a clever little seamstress.

She went slowly down the stairway, through the square white hall. The house was rather nice—simple and cheerful. It had been built in the Georgian style for a portrait-painter. There was nothing especially artistic about it except the big studio, which was now a music-room. It was fresh with white woodwork and chintz. Sophy especially liked the Sheraton furniture and paneling, because they reminded her of her Virginia home—Sweet Waters. How happy she could have been in a house like this, if only— Her eyes darkened. She stood still for a moment in the middle of the stairway, and Tilda halted patiently behind her. Then, before the girl could ask if anything were needed, she went on again and passed across the hall into the drawing-room.

As she had expected, her husband was

there already. He was seated at one end of a deep, chintz-covered sofa holding a book close to his bent face and the light of a lamp that stood on a little table near-by. His great figure seemed hunched and crouched together. His shoulders looked immense, out of proportion in his evening coat, the white oval of his shirt-front making them seem farther apart. Sophy noticed how dull his thick, fair hair looked in the lamplight—"staring"—like the coat of a horse out of condition. She knew that he had not been well for the last two years, but his illness puzzled her—with its violent interruptions of alternate rages and high spirits, its long stretches of indifferent apathy.

She did not go up to him, but stood in the middle of the room watching him. Was he going to be "nice," and let her enjoy her rare outing? Or was he going to be— There were several things that Cecil Chesney could be, which made his wife shiver again and draw her underlip between her teeth.

He was so absorbed in his book that he did not know she stood there watching him, studying him. His face had a curious expression. It seemed to her that it looked slightly swollen. His lips hung apart. Every now and then he moistened them slowly with his tongue. It was so like a cat licking of its chops that Sophy shivered again.

Then she said, in her warm, clear contralto, "I'm ready, Cecil."

He did not start, but his eyelids drew together and his lips closed. He laid one hand flat upon the open pages of the book and sat gazing at her between his drawn-up lids. Then his face loosened; he hunched his shoulders still more, giving a short, harsh laugh.

"By God!" he said. "You *are* a beauty!"

Sophy went white. She stood still, moving one slight foot nervously on the polished floor. Chesney sat looking at her. He smiled.

"Come here," he said.

Sophy dropped her chin slightly and looked steadily back at him from under her straight brows. Her dilated pupils made her gray eyes seem black.

"What for?" she said, in a low voice.

"I'll show you when you come."

"We'll be late, Cecil. It takes over half an hour from here to the Arundels'."



"Oh, m'm,
you do look
be-oot-i-ful!"
she murmured

The smile left his lips. "Come here to me," he said slowly. His voice had no expression in it; he spoke as an automaton might have spoken, but Sophy took a few reluctant steps in his direction. Then she stopped again and said: "I do so hate to be late. Won't you start now?"

His eyes opened wide, and he threw a look at her like a missile. It was what Sophy knew as his "red look." She went swiftly up to him.

"There," she said; "show me what you want to, and then we'll go."

But his eyelids had drawn together again, and he looked up at her with his curled, tantalizing smile. Yes; his face was slightly swollen—puffy about the lips and eyes.

"I've changed my mind," he drawled.

Something in Sophy's breast shriveled,

contracted. It was as if the material film that came next her soul hardened—to protect her soul.

"Very well," she said quietly; "then we can go at once."

Chesney sank his head deeper in his shoulders, settled his body deeper in the sofa.

"That's what I've changed my mind about," he said. "I'm not going."

"But——"

"I'm not going."

"It's a dinner, Cecil. It will be very rude."

"I'm not going."

"Shall I say you're ill?"

"You're not going, either."

He grinned it at her, gloating on the expression of her face. She went pale again, then crimson.

"I am going," she said, in a still voice.

Then she felt his fingers go softly round her arm.

They were motionless—staring at each other.

"Sit down by me," he said, drawing her delicately downward by the arm he held.

Her dignity kept her from resisting. She was drawn down among the deep cushions beside him. The warmth that his great body had left in them struck her bare arms and shoulders, giving her a feeling of sick repulsion. She stayed stiff and wooden beside him, like a jointed doll. As she sat there, mute and armed within against him, she could not escape from breathing his breath, his face was so close to hers. Its odor of mingled wines, cognac, cigarette smoke sickened her. The strong, sooty smell of cloth from the arm against her own added a new pang, for this smell of London cloth, which was so distinct to her foreign sense, had been once associated with the fascination of love.

Now he leaned his face forward and looked into her eyes, and she noticed, with that inward shriveling, how strange his were—so much paler than they used to be—

curiously glassy—the pupils mere specks of black in the center of the greenish irises.

"What's the use of posing to me?" he said, with a sort of blandness.

"Posing to you?"

"Yes—quite so. Doing the 'chastest icicle on Dian's Temple.' You forget—don't you? I've seen the hidden fire."

Sophy said nothing. The blood started to her cheek as under a whip. He moistened his lips in that slow way and smiled.

"Haven't I? Eh?"

She turned him a very quiet, haughty profile.

"I don't pretend to understand your moods, Cecil."

"You shall share this present one."

"I think not."

"I think—yes."

He flung his arm suddenly round her, drawing her close.

"Look here!" he said, and taking his hand from the pages of the book where it had been resting, he lifted the volume toward her. As her eyes lowered themselves to the book, his fastened upon her face. The next moment she had sprung up, thrusting him from her. The book lay sprawled on the floor between them. It was a very rare volume of morbidly licentious engravings—repulsive, abominable.

She was livid with scorn and loathing. Her breast heaved. She felt the scalding of furious tears against her eyelids. She could not speak; and with that bracelet of his big, soft fingers about her wrist, he held her, laughing silently, convulsed with laughter. But in Sophy there sprang to life something that was as dangerous as anything in him.

She said, whispering, "You'll be sorry all your life if you don't take your hand from me."

The light eyes wavered. Then he flung her back her hand. "Damme if you're worth the candle!" he said.

She turned and began walking quietly away from him with her long, free gait.

This seemed quite to frenzy him. He came at her like a bull, his head lowered. He took her by both shoulders.

"Look here!" he said. "What do you mean by wearing those pearls of Gerald's all the time?"

Sophy looked at him whitely. She smiled. "They were given me to wear, I believe."

"He's in love with you—with his brother's

wife. But I'll not have his baubles on your neck, nor antlers on my own head. Off with them!"

She stood frozenly, her head high. Her dark eyes poured scorn like flame upon him. He made a snatch at the necklace—another. She stood quite motionless, while the great, angry hands snatched at her throat. His last clutch broke the string. The pearls rained down, some into her bosom, the greater part upon the polished floor. He stood heavily, gazing at the little white drops as they rolled over the dark wood of the parquet.

While he gazed as if hypnotized, Sophy went swiftly out into the hall. She closed the door behind her. Her voice roused him, saying: "Mr. Chesney isn't feeling well enough to go out to-night. I shall go alone. Is the cab there?"

He heard the butler's voice answering.

She knew that he would not make a scene before the servants. Changing quickly to another mood, he glanced at the closed door, grinning at her astuteness. Then carefully he gathered up the fallen pearls and dropped them into his pocket.

Filling a liqueur-glass with cognac from the table, he slouched back to the sofa and lifted the fallen volume. He sat there for some two hours, sipping the cognac, moistening his lips slowly every now and then, poring over the licentious pictures.

II

IN the hansom, glad to be alone, Sophy sat with her arms tight against her breast, as though she would keep something in her from bursting. She felt singing from head to foot like a twanged bowstring. Only, no arrow had gone forth from her. That would have relieved this horrible feeling of ineffectual, raging pain—to feel that some arrow from the sharp armory of her wits had gone home in him to its feather. Sometimes she could speed such shafts. But to-night, sheer disgust had clogged her mind. She had only wanted to be rid of him—to get away, quite away. She sat gazing at the rhythmic play of the horse's glossy quarters and the soft blur of the May night. There had been a slight shower. The pavements were sleek and dark. There was a smell of soot and wet young leaves in the air, as of town and country oddly mingled in a kiss.

As this idea occurred to her, she made a movement of irritation. Kisses! Why should she think of kisses? They were nature's most banal lures—nauseous. And moodily, her eyes still black from the spread pupils, she recalled Cecil's first kiss and what it had meant to her. Something golden, vague, wonderful, fulfilling yet promising more—more than fulfilment—an opening of new desires, new aspirations, future fulfilments more splendid still. He had been a great lover. A line flashed to her.

As wolves love lambs—so lovers love their loves.

He was wolf now—she, lamb. Ah, well; no! He was mistaken—she was jaguar, leopard, catamount (he had called her a "silky catamount" in one of his rages), anything but lamb. She could feel her fangs growing. They were no longer little milk-teeth at which he laughed. Some day—if he continued to treat her in this way,—some day she would strike and strike with them—deep into some vital part of that which still lived and which had once been love. Yes; it would be better to drag a corpse between them than this fierce, bloated, soulless body that had once been inhabited by love.

But what was it? What had changed him? She had not been at all unhappy at first, though shocked by a certain violence in his passion for her which had verged on the brutal. In her own impassioned ignorance she had told herself that this must be the man in him—later, something finer, surer, stronger than reason convinced her that this was not so, that the blazing bowels of a smelting-furnace have nothing in common with the star-sown flame of love. She mused on the origin of the word "desire." "*De sidera*"—a turning from the stars. Yes; his back was toward the stars. She seemed to see him a Titanic figure, a dark Prometheus, digging, clawing, madly snouting his way toward the somber fires hid in the earth's matrix. She visualized things vividly. Yes; she saw him, as it were, a painting on the dim curtain of the night, rise there before her, grim and tremendous, his bare hands full of the heavy earth-fire. With this fire, she saw him speed from altar to altar where rose the silver flame of love, smothering it, beating it out with the dark-red, heavy coals of lust.

How was it? What had changed him? Surely, surely he had not always been as he

was now. No mortal man could have kept such a secret from the woman he loved and who had loved him. She would have sensed it, have shrunk from him involuntarily, even in those first days when violence had not worn this lurid mask. A waft of perfume from the rose-geraniums in the window-boxes of a house near which they were passing overcame her with homesickness.

Just as she had seen Cecil with fire-filled hands in her keen fancy, a moment ago, so, now, she saw the lawn at Sweet Waters, the ring of old acacia trees, the little, round, green wooden tables in their midst, covered with pots of mignonette and rose-geranium—herself and Charlotte swinging in the hammocks near-by—the peep of blue mountains through the hedge of box—

She pinched the back of her hand sharply, feeling the tears start. Virginia was far away—like her childhood, like her dead mother, like all the other simple, lovely things that had made life joyous.

How strange it seemed to think that the old, familiar life was going on there just the same! Oh, for a ride through the Virginian fields and woods! Oh, to hear the soft jargon of the darkies—to have if only twenty-four hours of the old, free, simple life!

The cab stopped before a house in Bruton Street. This was London. Perhaps there was no Virginia. Perhaps she had only dreamed it.

When she found that her hostess had not yet come down, she was startled.

"Am I too early? Isn't dinner at eight?" she asked the butler.

"At half-past eight, madam."

He looked distressed. He was a devotee of Sophy's. She always remembered to ask after his little girl, who was lame.

"Never mind. I will go up to Mrs. Arundel's room. How is little Bertha?"

His face lightened.

"Better, madam. Thank you kindly. Only a five-pun' weight on her poor foot now."

"I'm so glad. Give her my love."

"I will, madam. She's aye talking of you."

Sophy went up-stairs and knocked at Olive Arundel's door.

"Who?" said a sweet, slight voice.

"Sophy. I've come too early."

"Oh, you darling!" called the voice. "Come in. It isn't locked." Sophy heard

her add, "Open the door for Mrs. Chesney, Marie."

She opened the door herself before the maid could reach it, and entered. The room was charming with old French chintz, gray and pink. The dressing-table was as elaborate as a lady-altar. Before it sat Olive, with her beautiful powdery brown hair over her shoulders. The air was full of the scent of "Chypre," a perfume then very fashionable and which Sophy disliked. She could not understand why Olive used it. "Violet" or "Clover" would have suited her so much better. She went up to Olive, and they kissed each other.

"You darling!" said Mrs. Arundel again. "How stunning you look! And what luck! Did you think it was for eight?"

"I thought your note said eight o'clock."

"Then it was my beastly handwriting. But I'm awfully glad, all the same. Now we can have a comfy talk. Hurry up, Marie! Do my hair; then you can go. Mrs. Chesney will hook my frock."

Sophy sat in a little Louis XVI chair and watched the hair-dressing. She thought, as she so often did, how much prettier it would look dressed simply, without being frizzled so elaborately in front and puffed so intricately behind. But, then, nothing could spoil Olive's looks—or her hair. It was such baby hair, so fine and gauzy, like a soft, brown mist. Mrs. Arundel's face had taken on the serious look that women's faces wear when their hair is being dressed. Her eyes followed the movements of Marie's hands in the mirror, and every now and then she said, "Not so high," or, "You're getting that puff too much to the right." Her eyes were large and candid, of a soft Madonna-blue. Her small, prettily shaped mouth was pastel-pink. All her features were small and prettily shaped. She was the type of woman who still looks girlish at thirty-five. As Sophy watched her, she was also thinking of how even her friends said that "Olive was never happy unless she had a lover." Three years in England had taught Sophy that a woman may be an excellent mother, a good friend, an attentive wife, and yet have "lovers." How strange it seemed to her! She could not imagine such a thing happening without an upheaval of the universe—her universe, at least. She could understand a woman made desperate by unhappiness "running away" from her husband with another man—but to go on

living with one man as his wife and having a lover—lovers— She had given up trying to solve it. She knew that Olive's present flame was a Roman nobleman—Count Varesca—an attaché of the Italian embassy. She seemed to bloom under it into a sort of recrudescence of virginal charm. Her cheeks were like the lining of conch shells. She never used cosmetics. It was her new love for Attilio Varesca that gave that heavenly pink to her cheeks and lips. And, withal, she looked so serene, so happy. Sophy could not in the least get at the psychology of the thing.

"How you stare with your great eyes, you dear!" said Olive. "Don't I look nice?"

"You look perfectly lovely."

"Wait till you see what a deevy frock Jean has sent me."

"Jean Worth?"

"Is there any other Jean?"

"Jean-Jacques?" suggested Sophy, laughing. Olive laughed also.

"Ah, well; you see he had to put Jacques after Jean to identify himself."

Then she sent Marie away.

"You know, Sophy dear, I really have something to tell you."

"Is it nice?"

"No, it's nasty—perfectly disgusting!"

"What is it about?"

"Your dear mother-in-law—Lady Wychcote."

Sophy stiffened. She rose and stood to her full height, looking down at her friend.

"Well?" she said.

"Sophy dear, your eyes are jet black. You mustn't take it too seriously. Only—I thought you ought to know. She's saying it everywhere."

"Saying what?" asked Sophy quietly.

"She's saying perfectly beastly things about your influence on Cecil. Trying to put it all on you."

"To put what on me?"

"All his—his queerness. She says you've alienated him from his family. And—"

Even Olive's glib little tongue stuck here.

"Well?" said Sophy, as before.

"She's saying—oh, she's really a beast, that woman! She's saying that you've given him drugs—taught him how to take them."

"Drugs?" said Sophy. Her slender brows were knitted together. She was as pale as when she had stood frozen while Chesney



Was he going to be "nice," and let her enjoy her rare outing? Or was he going to be— There were several things that Cecil Chesney could be, which made his wife shiver again and draw her underlip between her teeth

clutched at the pearls on her throat. "Drugs?" she repeated.

"Yes—opium—morphine—that kind of thing— I consulted Jack before telling you." (Jack was Mr. Arundel.) "And he said I *should*, by *all* means. You aren't vexed with me for telling you, *are* you?"

Olive's italics were very plaintive.

Sophy was looking down at the tip of her slim, white-satin shoe. She said in a low voice, very gently, "No; I thank you."

Then she turned and went to the window, pulling aside the curtains and looking blindly out into the soft, pale night.

Drugs! She had never thought of that! All resentment at her mother-in-law's accusation was engulfed in that appalling revelation of dark possibilities.

Behind her back, Mrs. Arundel stole nervous peeps at the little ormolu clock on

the mantelpiece. That new frock had quantities of hooks and eyes on it. She wished, now, that she had not sent Marie away, or that she had waited to tell Sophy until the gown was on. It was unfortunate. One *couldn't* go up to a person who was overcome with righteous wrath and say, "Would you mind, dear, just hooking me up before you give way further to your feelings?" But just here Sophy turned and came toward her.

"We'd better be getting on with your *toilette*, Olive," she said.

"What a darling you are!" cried Mrs. Arundel, quite melted. "You're so *unselfish*. It's perfectly touching."

Sophy couldn't help smiling.

"It isn't unselfishness," she said; "it's the instinct of *self-preservation*. I can't give way to decent, moderate, little angers. I'm like a volcano. If I let myself boil over,

it means devastation to the whole landscape for miles around."

She was talking to keep Olive from seeing how deep the thing had pierced her. And she hooked deftly and lightly, with fingers that were icy cold but nimble. After she had admired her friend and the new gown sufficiently, she said: "Was there any more? What motive did she say I had?"

Mrs. Arundel glanced slyly at the clock again. She had still a good twenty minutes before her guests would arrive.

"Let's sit here cosily by the window—yes, do pull the curtains back—and I'll tell you *everything*!" she said, subsiding into a low chair. Sophy drew up another and sat waiting.

"My dear," Olive began, "the old cat hates you. That explains everything."

"She hates all Americans," said Sophy.

"So stupid of her! Yes; I believe she does. And she's wild with rage because poor dear Gerald is sickly—and won't marry. And Cecil has married *you* and flouted the family politics."

"Those Liberal articles he wrote some years ago?"

"Liberal! You never read such Whiggish, Radical stuff in your life! The Wychcotes are the *Toriest* Tories in England. Yes; he did that." That was bad enough. Then he went exploring in Africa and got laurels from the R. G. S. and chucked *that*."

"Yes," said Sophy.

"He's really awfully able, Sophy—brilliant—"

"Yes; I know."

Olive paused a moment.

"Can't you do *anything* with him, Sophy?"

"No."

"Poor dear! Well; I suppose not. He was always as obstinate as—as—a beehemoth."

Sophy couldn't restrain a tired little laugh.

"Well; you know what I mean. But when one thinks of how——"

Sophy broke in on her firmly.

"Olive dear, this isn't telling me 'everything.' I want to know what motives Lady Wychcote attributes to me."

"Really, dear—it's so disgusting of her!"

"What did she say?"

"You *will* have it?"

"Yes—please."

"She says you want to get rid of Cecil so that you can marry Gerald."

Sophy was silent for some moments. Olive leaned forward and took her hand.

"Don't mind too much, dear," she coaxed. "Only—be on your guard."

Sophy was still silent. Then she said in her soft, clear contralto,

"Now, *that* is what I call a wicked woman."

And Olive, of course, could not know that she and her "lovers" were contrasted in Sophy's mind with the chaste Lady Wychcote, when this remark was made.

III

THE dinner was as pleasant and heterogeneous as Olive's dinners always were. There was a dean who was also a wit, an actor-manager and his clever wife, the chief Tory whip, a noted member of the Opposition, a free-lance of Letters, a woman writer of the George Egerton school, *et cetera, et cetera*. Attilio Varesca, of course. But Sophy could not rouse from the dark mood into which Olive's confidences had thrown her. The hateful scene with her husband had already destroyed all the gay anticipation which she had felt at the idea of an evening in the brilliant, whimsical world that liked and spoiled her. She had been kept at home by Cecil's humors and strange illness during all the early spring. Of late, he had been in his gentler frame of mind—very "nice" to her. He had seemed to want her to have the pleasure of this evening's gaiety. She was only twenty-seven. To be known as a beauty in London society, and petted by some of its most famous circle—this was very bewitching to seven-and-twenty, even with Tragedy glowering in the background. But now all was spoiled for her. She used to dream a dream in those days. It recurred often. She would dream that she had been running, running from some vague, dark Something, and at last, in a place of safety, sought to quench her thirst. There would be an old wooden pump in the dream, like the one in the stable-yard at Sweet Waters. She would work the stiff handle until, when nearly exhausted, she would feel the sag of the rising water. But when she leaned her mouth to the spout, only a gush of dust and gravel poured from it. She had now the sensation of that dream. It might be diamond-dust ground from clashing wits that filled the air, but the thirst of her spirit made her choke upon it.

As she went with Olive again to the latter's bedroom, while the other women chattered over their wraps in the hall below, she said: "I don't think I'll go on to this musicale with you, Olive. I'm tired. I think I'll just have Parkson call me a cab and go home."

"Now—I do feel a wretch!" Mrs. Arundel exclaimed, turning on her a reproachful face. "It's those horrid things I repeated to you, of course!"

She caught both Sophy's slim, Vandyke-looking hands in her soft little ones.

"Don't make me feel a pig by not going, there's a *darling!*" she pleaded. "Don't, don't be morbid!"

"I'm not morbid—I'm really tired," said Sophy, looking down at the tip of her shoe and moving it softly on the carpet.

"And if you will go home, don't talk about having a cab. I'll send you in Jack's brougham. It's *beastly* of Cecil not giving you a carriage!"

"He says we can't afford it."

"Then Gerald ought to give you one. The Wychcotes simply *stink* of money!"

Sophy smiled faintly. She could never get used to hearing such words come so simply from pretty lips.

"I know," she said; "but Gerald gives Cecil an allowance, as it is."

Olive opened her hyacinth-blue eyes frankly. "But Cecil had quite a fortune of his own! How does that happen?"

"I don't know," said Sophy tiredly. Money did not interest her. She had a thousand dollars a year from her father's estate. That gave her a rich feeling of independence. She loved to feel that her clothes, even her underlinen and shoes and stockings, were bought with her own money. With her exquisite, tall figure, so much like that of the sandaled Victory, she made the simplest gown look distinguished. She did not know how much it was that Gerald Wychcote allowed his younger brother. She had never asked. But she knew that the house in Regent's Park belonged to Gerald, and that he let them have it for a nominal rent. Doty Hampford, a first cousin of the Wychcotes, had told her that. She had never asked anything about these matters. She did not even know whether Cecil would inherit anything in case of Gerald's death.

"I think it's a shame!" said Olive. "I suppose he made ducks and drakes of it

with that exploring fad and traveling in India and such places. Such *nonsense!*"

Then she took Sophy's hand again.

"Do come!" she coaxed. "Jean de Reszke is going to sing."

"There's another Jean that you forget," slipped in Sophy, smiling again.

"Yes. So there is. And there's a perfect *dear* of a man I want you so much to meet. A friend of Varesca's—a Lombard nobleman, the Marchese Amaldi. Italians are perfectly *enchanting*. Don't you think so? I am like Lord Carlisle—*Italianissimo!*"

Sophy smiled vaguely, remembering when Olive had been Austrianissimo and Irishissimo and Frenchissimo and so on and so on.

"Does that smile mean you're coming? Ah, *do!* Marco Amaldi is the most heavenly man I ever knew—except Varesca."

"A 'heavenly' man?"

Sophy was still smiling.

"Yes. Perfectly *deevy*, and *so clever!*"

Suddenly Sophy's smile faded and her eyes grew dark.

"Now you've got your 'fey' look," said Mrs. Arundel, watching her curiously. "What does it mean? Going with me?"

Sophy did not speak at once. Her eyes seemed to watch something forming slowly, far away—something that gathered distinctness against the confused background of life's harlequinade. Suddenly she started, closed her eyelids an instant, then looked at Olive. Her eyes were still wide and vague. They looked slightly out of focus. Olive felt a little shiver go over her.

"What is it?" she asked. "What do you see?"

"Nothing. It's just a feeling. I'll go with you. Something is going to happen to me to-night—something important. The room will have three windows—"

She broke off again, and looked from Olive's face, far out.

Mrs. Arundel's voice took on an awed tone. "Are you really superstitious?"

"About that, I am."

"About what?"

"About a room with three windows. Don't ask me. I can't explain it."

"Olive! Come along! We'll be *beastly* late!" shouted Arundel, from the hall.

The two women went down together, Mrs. Arundel still rather awed. Sophy's eyes were really so uncanny sometimes—very, very beautiful of course, but eerie,

weird—all those old words. Now if she, Olive Arundel, were a man, she would prefer something less peculiar, more "human." Olive was very fond of this word—"human." She felt that, like charity, it covered a multitude of sins—pleasant little sins.

When they reached the Ponceforths', the musicale was in full swing. Some one was singing a song by Maude Valerie White. Sophy heard a little gasp from Olive—her arm was impetuously seized.

"Sophy," she whispered, in spite of the singing, "there *are* three windows!"

Sophy, too, was gazing at the windows. She said nothing. An artist had lent his flat to the Ponceforths for their musicale. The big studio made such a capital place for singing. There were three wide windows at one end.

Sophy moved forward as in a sort of daze, half pleasant, half fearful. That feeling as of an imminent crisis grew on her. Some one brought her to a chair. It was a little apart from the other chairs. She sat rather rigidly, her hands one over the other in her lap. Her profile shone like pearly gold against a curtain of old, dahlia-brown Genoa velvet. Presently she felt that some one was watching her with peculiar intentness. Little spangles of sensation crept over the back of her head. It was as though a little electric feather were being drawn softly along her hair. Then Jean de Reszke began to sing. It was a wild Hungarian folk-song that he sang with that warm, wild voice of his. The words meant nothing to her. The voice told her that it was a song of love and the despair even of love fulfilled. She thought what a gentleman he looked in contrast to all other tenors. She saw Edouard seated a little behind him, fanning a pretty woman in mauve. He was not going to sing, but he had come with his brother. He, too, looked such a gentleman.

De Reszke finished his song on a slow, melancholy note, like a ray of fading sunlight in autumn. All the melancholy of late autumn seemed to penetrate Sophy's bosom. Her throat ached. Then a quick revulsion of feeling seized her. It was as though a sword of light had pierced her from the back. Her heart began to beat thickly. That "something"—that "something" that was going to "happen"—was near her, drawing closer. Varesca's handsome little face bent smiling toward her.

"Mrs. Chesney, I have a friend who can-

not wait for the music to be done for being introduced to you. May I bring him—the Marchese Amaldi—a good friend of mine." Varesca's rather quaint English sounded very soft and pleasant to her.

"Why yes—do," she said, smiling at him.

"Marco—" said Varesca, half turning. Amaldi, who had stood just behind Sophy, came forward. She looked up at him, with the smile that she had given Varesca just touching her lips. It melted suddenly away as she met Amaldi's eyes. They looked gravely at each other while she gave him her hand. Before they could speak to each other, the girl who had been at first singing began another song. For a second longer, Sophy and Amaldi continued to look at each other in that quiet, serious way. Then she turned her eyes on the singer. That had been a strange feeling—the feeling which had come over her as she met Amaldi's eyes. It was as if they were recognizing each other, rather than just becoming acquainted. As the girl went on with the rather tiresome song, Sophy turned her head and glanced at him again. This time he smiled, very slightly. She smiled in answer. Yes; it was really as if they were old friends meeting thus unexpectedly again.

And how charming his face was—dark, irregular, delicate, high-bred! Now, again, that she saw him without looking at him, in that way women have, she thought he had a proud, reserved air. She always noticed at once the color of people's eyes. Amaldi's were a warm, clear olive, not large but brilliant and beautifully set. His figure showed a lithe symmetry as he leaned relaxed against the curtain of brown velvet. He was not very tall—about five feet eleven she fancied—but, though slender, he looked strong. He reminded her of a dark Hermes. It was odd how everything about him seemed familiar to her.

IV

THE songs followed one another quickly. There was no time for conversation in between. Now and then, Sophy glanced at Amaldi, who stood quietly leaning against the brown-velvet curtain. He would return her glances with that warm, deep look of pleasure that seemed so natural, so familiar, and yet that took her breath away. "If I were a Roman Catholic and he were a priest," she thought oddly, "I could confess



DRAWN BY GEORGE GIBBON

His last clutch broke the string. The pearls rained down, some into her bosom, the greater part upon the polished floor. He stood heavily, gazing at the little white drops as they rolled over the dark wood of the parquet.

anything to him." Then she smiled, her eyes on the open mouth of the singer. That had been such a queer thought. Amaldi looked so little like a priest—rather as if he might make an impetuous soldier. Yes—one of those young, fierce soldiers of the *Risorgimento*. She imagined him in the hat of the *Bersaglieri*—But no—that had been a Piedmontese regiment—Amaldi was a Lombard. With her quick, visualizing fancy, she tried to place him in his proper setting—as a child. What sort of home had he lived in as a child? What sort of countryside held his dearest memories as Sweet Waters held hers? Como? Had he lived in a beautiful old villa on Como, like Fabricio in Stendhal's "*Chartreuse de Parme*"? Had he played with the little peasants of Cadenabbia? She saw the lovely lake floating purplish blue before her—the dull silver of snow-peaks. Amaldi as a little brown-legged boy wrestling with the little villagers—swimming naked with them in the purplish water like a little brown fish. Then, suddenly, she became aware of the singer's mouth again. How wide she opened it! How her tongue quivered, like a little snake's head above the row of lower teeth! The singer had been very badly taught. She felt Amaldi's eyes on her profile, and again she felt that delicate spangle of sensation, half physical, half spiritual, as if a little electric plume had been brushed across her cheek. After a second or two, she looked at him again. His eyes smiled at her.

Then De Reszke sang again, and when he had finished, Olive leaned over and whispered: "This is getting dreadfully dull and stuffy. Don't you think so? Jean won't sing any more. Do come with me. I'm going on to Kitty Illingham's ball."

Without waiting for Sophy to answer she said to Varesca, "Do help me to persuade her, you and Amaldi."

Varesca obediently began to gush forth entreaties. Amaldi said nothing. She had not yet heard the sound of his voice. But his eyes said, "Please come."

"Very well," said Sophy to Olive. Amaldi's eyes said, "Thank you," so plainly that she felt the warm blood come stealing up over her throat and face. And this blush confused her, made her drop her eyes. "What am I blushing for?" she thought. "I must be nervous with all that I've gone through this evening." That feeling of singing from head to foot like a just twanged

bowstring came over her again. But now she was not angry, only excited and strangely expectant, as though things were going to happen—happen—happen.

When she entered the ballroom, she felt, rather than saw, people turning to look after her. She had the oddest feeling of being glad that she was tall—that there was so much of her to feel that keen flame of life that had sprung up so suddenly within her.

A woman who admired her said to a man: "Do look at Sophy Chesney! It does her good to be immured by her ogre. She's simply ablaze, to-night."

The man said: "I know she's been called the most beautiful American in England. But I never thought so till to-night."

Sophy herself wondered if this queer, supervitalized sensation that she had was happiness. She could not tell. She was only one throb of exultation at being alive. A voice spoke close beside her. She had never heard it before, yet it seemed familiar. She turned, then started. For the moment she had forgotten Amaldi, absorbed in that strange, almost feverish realization of her own individuality.

"Will you dance this with me?" he was asking.

And as she moved off with him, it seemed also as if they had often danced together before. He did not waltz like a foreigner but used the long, gliding American step as she did.

When they stopped they found themselves near the conservatory.

"Let us sit in there awhile," she said.

They sat down near a bank of gardenias, and Amaldi fanned her with the fan of white-peacock feathers.

"You're not afraid to use peacock's feathers?" he asked, smiling. "In Italy we are superstitious about them."

She answered, smiling also: "I have my full share of superstition, but not about things like that. Are you really afraid of peacock's feathers, *Marchese*?"

"No; but my mother wouldn't have one near her for worlds. She says that she has added all the Italian superstitions to the American ones. She laughs at herself about it, but she minds such things very much."

"Is your mother an American?" said Sophy, surprised and pleased at this idea. If Amaldi's mother was an American, that would account in a great measure, she

thought, for her feeling toward him—that odd feeling of having known him before.

"Yes," Amaldi was saying. "I am half-American through my mother. She was a Miss Brainton."

"I know the Braintons," said Sophy. "I am an American—a Virginian. My name was Sophy Taliaferro. And that's odd—" she broke off, realizing that her maiden name was probably of Italian origin—"because, though it's pronounced 'Tolliver,' it's spelt 'Taliaferro.' I never really thought of it before—but the first Taliaferro must have been an Italian!"

"Why, yes," said Amaldi eagerly. "There is a Taliaferro family in Italy."

"So you're half-American and I'm half-Italian," she went on, looking at him pleasantly. "Such coincidences *are* strange, aren't they?"

"They're very delightful," said Amaldi, in a voice as frank as her look. He was thinking: "You are the woman I have imagined all my life. It seems very wonderful that you should have Italian blood. But fate likes to mock one in ways like this. Do not be many times a fool, my good Marco."

Sophy liked this frank voice of his and the clear look in his olive eyes so much that she gave way to impulse. She was always far too impulsive.

"It seems to me, *Marchese*," she said, with the smile that he was beginning to watch for, "that fate means us to become friends."

Amaldi thought, "And there is something of the child in you that makes me worship."

He said a little formally but with feeling,

"I should consider that the greatest honor that could come to me." Then he added: "Since you're so gracious, I'd like to confess something. May I?"

"Yes; do!" said Sophy, still smiling.

"It is this: When Varesca introduced me to you this evening, I had the feeling of having known you before. Strange, wasn't it?"

She hesitated an instant, then said:

"It was even stranger than you know—because I, too, had that feeling about you. Such things almost make one believe in the old Hindu ideas. Perhaps in some other world and age we have been friends already. It's really very mysterious—"

"But, after all," said Amaldi, "mystery is what makes life worth while."

"I know," she said dreamily, "yet people are always crying to solve it—"

"Yes; that's one of its chief uses, I suppose—but not its end."

Sophy looked at him, interested.

"What do you think its end is?" she asked.

"Itself," he answered.

She sat silent a moment. Then she said, a little shyly,

"Is that how you think of the Absolute—of God—as mystery?"

"Yes," said Amaldi.

He went on, in a lighter tone: "The destiny of the churchly God has always seemed so dreary to me. Think of it! A supremely well-informed Supreme Man—for whom there could be no mystery. An immortality of sound information that couldn't be added to or subtracted from!"

Sophy looked at him with kindled eyes.

"Oh, *Marchese*," she said, laughing softly, "we really couldn't help being friends, you know! You must come to see me. My husband is not very well—so I don't give dinners or parties or go out much myself. But I like to have my friends come to see me."

Amaldi thought:

"You have a beautiful heart, and I don't misunderstand it. It is full only of kindness. But this is love that I feel in mine. I shall suffer—*ma ciao!*"

"*Ciao*" is Milanese, and it means many things. On this occasion it signified that Amaldi did not care how much he suffered so that he might be near Sophy—if only as her friend. He said:

"I won't try to thank you. May I come soon?"

"As soon as you please," she said gaily. Then, all at once, she remembered. Cecil's face came before her as she had last seen it. She rose, and they went again into the ballroom.

Amaldi, noticing the sudden shadow in her eyes, thought, "Ah, she is not happy!"

And he scorned himself for feeling glad that she was not happy. But only part of him was glad of it. Another part of him felt quite willing to be unhappy if only she might have happiness.

V

It was four o'clock when Sophy and Mrs. Arundel left the ball. Olive would not hear of Sophy's taking a cab but sent her on in her own carriage. As she rolled through the empty streets, above which the

dawn was beginning to quicken, Sophy had a queer feeling of driving through the huge echoing halls of a vast and sinister house from which the roof had been lifted.

When she entered her own hall, the sight of the pallid, heavy-eyed footman who admitted her distressed her still further. She hated servants to have to wait up for her. She always gave Tilda strict orders to go to bed. If her gown were too intricate to unfasten by herself, she went to Tilda's room, and the girl, sitting up in bed like a somnambulist, would unlace her mistress and sink off to sleep again as soon as the last length was out of the eyelets.

The footman lighted and gave her her bedroom candle. Chesney disliked gas to burn all night.

"Good-night, William! I'm afraid you are very tired," said Sophy, in that way which Cecil sneered at in vain, and which made her servants adore her, though thinking her very "furrin."

"Not at all, madam," said William politely. His tone suggested that he really preferred taking his rest on a hard hall chair with an hour's nap in bed before rising at six.

Sophy sighed as she went up-stairs. All her exultant feeling of the evening had only been another illusion. The time was out of joint again. As she passed Chesney's door, a thick, heavy smell of lamp smoke made her turn. She tried the knob softly. The door opened, and the nauseous smell flooded her. Yes; he had gone to sleep still poring over that odious drawing and the copy of *La Fontaine's* fables with its rare, licentious prints. The lamp, almost burnt out, was sending up a thick, brownish smoke—the wick, barely moist with oil, was fringed with little mushrooms of fire. Sophy extinguished the lamp and stood gazing down at her husband. He had been a magnificent-looking man, three years ago. He was still handsome, but in the way that a fine stallion is still handsome when its withers and back begin to sink. It was as if he were sinking in on himself—as if the great muscles and sinews were relaxing like elastic that has been overused. Holding the candle closer, Sophy gazed and gazed at him. It was as if she were gazing at a stranger. There was a fine spangling of sweat on his broad forehead; as he breathed, his lips puffed in and out. They looked dry and cracked. He slept heavily, as though his veins held lead, as though his limbs were

weighted. The solid heaviness of his sleep struck her as appalling. And, suddenly, what Olive had told her rushed over her again. Standing motionless, her eyes took frightened scurries about the room, over the bed, the dressing-table, the little stand that supported the lamp. A glass and bottle that had held cognac stood empty. She bent closer—then suddenly drew back ashamed. She was not like *Psyche*, spying on Love with her candle, but a woman gazing at defenceless sensuality—at the degraded body that had once housed love. An immense pity came over her. She felt that she had been guilty toward him—guilty of staring at his bare degradation with calm eyes while he lay unconscious. She was not being his wife but a cold critic. And perhaps it was only she who could save him, who could restore to him his real self.

Setting down her candle, she drew away the book from under his heavy hands, closed it, and laid it to one side. He did not stir or mutter. Then she knelt down beside him, hiding her face against the bed. She wished to pray for him and for herself. But her thoughts scattered, whirled with the coiling sparkles against her closed eyelids.

Mystery—mystery—mystery— This word kept beating through her mind. Amaldi had said that he thought of God as "mystery." Yes; it was all mysterious—pain, joy, illness, health, goodness, vice—even love. But love was the greatest mystery. Whence did it come, and whither go? Where was her love for Cecil?

Mystery—mystery—mystery.

When she reached her own bedroom, however, and found herself once more alone, that overkeyed, excited feeling came back upon her. She glanced at the bed with distaste. It was impossible to think of stretching her limbs out calmly and resting her head on a pillow. She went from one window to the other, drawing back the curtains. Her room was a corner one, and looked south and east. The dawn was now in full flower. Gazing at the eastern sky, she corrected her simile. The whole lower heaven was covered by a dull-red down of tiny cloudlets. It looked softly convex above the quiet tops of the trees, like the breast of a vast bird. Somewhere, far above, out of sight in the pale-gray vault of air, she fancied its golden crest and beak darting among the stars that were as little, shining gnats to it. She went and glanced



And perhaps it was only she who could save him, who could restore to him his real self.
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at her watch which Tilda had placed on the table beside her bed. A quarter to five. She would wait until a quarter past; then she would ring up the butler (he, at least, had had a night's rest) and order her horse. Yes—to be in the saddle before six—that was what she needed, not to stretch out stupidly on a bed. And quickly she began to take off her gown, and bring out her riding-habit and boots from one of the big cupboards just outside her door. Her horse was another of Gerald's presents. He had sent it down from Dynehurst in April, on her twenty-seventh birthday. One of the Dynehurst grooms was sent with it for her service.

As the sun rose higher, a thin, white mist began to coil softly like steam among the trees of Regent's Park. It was going to be a lovely day. At five minutes to six she was

mounted. The splendid brown gelding seemed as glad to be abroad as she was. She had taken a cold plunge while waiting for him to come. She felt glorious again, all lifted up high above the normal griefs and trials of life. The horse "quhrrred" with pleasure and good spirits at every step. She crossed over to Hyde Park and had the Row almost to herself for half an hour. It was strange to hear the gradual, low, crescendo growl of London rise about her—like the growl of some prehistoric monster rousing in an evil mood. And as she galloped to and fro, swung into a physical ecstasy by the brown's free, musical stride, she thought again of Amaldi. Was he asleep or awake? Had he left the ball early and gone home to discreet slumbers, or was he conscious of this wonderful morning, as she was? She

recalled her presentiment in regard to the three windows, and of something important about to happen to her last evening. Had it happened? Was her meeting with Amaldi an important thing? How was it important? Perhaps his friendship was to prove very wonderful. Perhaps, when she knew him better—very well—as a real friend—he would advise her, help her. He, too, had known unhappiness—of that she was certain. There was a look in his eyes that only comes to the eyes of those who have suffered. But how had he suffered? In what way, exactly? She could not imagine him as in love with his wife. It was strange—how that idea refused to be accepted by her mind. Then she thought of her fancying how, if he were a priest, she could confess anything to him. How was that? It came to her suddenly that it was because he would be sure to understand. There! The key to him! She had it. He was one who would understand—anything. She tried to analyze this feeling, but could not. It was one of those convictions that come to one, as Goethe said true thoughts should come, whole and unsummoned, like children of God, saying, "Here we are."

She did not see her husband that day. He sent word that he had waked feeling badly and would "sleep it off." Toward evening, when she wished to go to him, his man told her that he was still sleeping. She went to bed herself without seeing him. The next morning again he sent word that he felt better, but would not be up till after luncheon and wished to be left quiet. This made her uneasy. She would have liked to go to him in spite of his wish, but she dared not. Such intrusions only made him furious.

As she had some shopping to do for the baby, she took him and his nurse with her in a cab. When she returned and went to her writing-room, a gay little apartment looking out on the small garden, she found Cecil lounging there in one of the easy chairs. As soon as she glanced at him, she saw that he had what she called his "good" look—that is, his face was quiet and rather pale and his mouth and eyes gentle. He gave a rather embarrassed smile as she entered, lifting one shoulder slightly in a way he had when nervously self-conscious. She knew that he was repentant for the way that he had behaved to her on Thursday evening, and would tell her so.

She went up to him, put one hand on his hair, and kissed his forehead.

"So you're all right again? I'm so glad," she said, taking a chair in front of him. "I was worried about you yesterday."

"Yes; I had a devilish time," he said. As he spoke, he blew a cloud of cigarette smoke that half veiled his face from her, and again he smiled in that half-sheepish way. This smile always roused in Sophy a feeling mingled of tenderness and irritation. She sat watching him smoke for a few moments without saying anything more. He always seemed to her to smoke feverishly, avidly, as if the cigarette were a sort of food and he very hungry. His cigarettes were enormous, made to order for him. He smoked without a holder, down to the very end. The hairs of his mustache, just above his lip, were dotted with little yellow specks where the heat had scorched them. She thought that it must be very bad for him to smoke so fast, and such quantities of these huge cigarettes. But she dared not say anything. A word only was sufficient to throw him from a "good" mood into a "bad" one. He broke the silence himself.

"I say, Daphne!" he blurted suddenly. "I was a beast to you. Beg pardon."

Sophy looked at him consideringly without replying. Somehow, this casual apology roused anew all the feeling of outraged anger that she had felt. She hated, too, for him to call her "Daphne" on these occasions. It seemed such a cheap sentimentality. He had given her the name in their sweetheart days, because of that book of verse which she had written at twenty-one, and which had brought her a momentary fame.

"Going to sulk a bit—eh?" he now asked, with that conciliatory little grin of his.

"No; it isn't sulking," said Sophy. "I'm only wondering how much you really care?"

"I care a deuce of a lot, Daphne."

"And you think such things as you said and—did to me, the other night, can be made all right by a 'beg pardon'?"

Chesney moved uneasily. He lit another cigarette with elaborate care.

"Look here, Daphne!" he said, in a would-be bluff, frank tone. "What *did* I say—and do?"

"You really don't remember?" Sophy asked, looking at him keenly.

"Well—I've a hazy notion that I went for Gerald—about those pearls. Nasty

things!" he broke off viciously. "Mere pretty diseases—tumors—I loathe 'em."

Sophy had wondered many times what had become of her pearls after he had strewn the floor with them. She said now, "What have you done with them, Cecil?"

"Oh, they're safe enough!" he said grudgingly. "I'll have 'em strung over for you. Counted 'em this morning. They're all there. So you haven't got *that* against me."

Sophy sat looking down at her hands, and turning her wedding-ring slowly round and round. She had never thought that she could come to hate an inanimate object as fiercely as she sometimes hated her wedding-ring. But to-day she did not hate it. It seemed a dreary little symbol of a dreary fact that must be borne somehow—that was all. Suddenly she lifted her eyes to his. They were kind and gentle.

"I don't harbor things 'against you,' Cecil," she said. "The pearls were the least of it all. It was the way you spoke of Gerald and that—that loathsome book." Her look grew suddenly impassioned with resentment. "Why should you wish to show me such a thing?"

Chesney was deeply embarrassed again. He looked away from her.

"Oh—men are hell!" he said thickly. "You'd never really understand a man, Sophy. There are abysses—cesspools in us." He got up suddenly and flung himself on his knees beside her, hiding his face in her lap like a child.

"Don't try to understand," she heard him muttering. "Just try to—to forgive."

There was something at once piteous and repulsive in that huge figure crouching so humbly at her knee. Sophy felt a choking sensation.

"Get up—get up, dear!" she pleaded. "I do forgive you! Oh, please, please get up!"

"Will you kiss me, then?" came the muttering voice, muffled by her skirts.

"Yes. Only get up—do, dear, do!"

He knelt up, and, flinging his arms around her, reached his mouth thirstily to hers. That kiss was a deathly draft to Sophy, but pity made her accept it without shrinking visibly. In her mind the thought went round and round: "Mystery—mystery. What was once like life to me is now like death—worse." Then: "I must be kind to him. If I am kind, perhaps I can save him."

Chesney was fingering the folds of her gown shyly.

"I say—what a darling you look in this frock, Daphne!" he said. "It clings so—shows your lovely Greek body so beautifully. What's it made of?"

Sophy was amused. It was the simplest house-gown of thin white woolen stuff. "Why, it's the most ordinary material, goose!" she said smiling. "They call it chudder cloth."

Chesney gasped, as if she had sprinkled water in his face; then, sinking back upon the floor at her feet, he went into fits of the most immoderate mirth. "Oh! Ah!" He could scarcely get his breath. "Forgive me, Sophy! But 'chudder cloth'—'chudder'—I never heard anything so ludicrous in my life—"

And he rolled over on the carpet, shaken from head to foot with preposterous laughter, convulsed, strangling, beating the carpet with his hands.

Sophy sat quietly watching him with the shadow of a worried frown between her brows. She was used to these outbursts caused by some especial yet apparently trivial word. Sometimes they took the form of mirth, as to-day, sometimes that of fury. She remembered what Olive had told her that his mother said. Her heart felt like pap within her breast. There came a knock at the door. Chesney sprang to his feet, sobered, scowling at the closed door.

"Come in!" said Sophy.

It was William, with a card on a tray.

"The Marquis Amaldi to see you, madam."

"Very well," said Sophy.

Cecil lighted another of his huge cigarettes. "Who's this foreigner?" he asked, amiably enough.

"A friend of Count Varesca's. I met him at the Illinghams'—no, at the Ponceforths' the other night."

"Mh! Well, so long! I'll make myself scarce for a bit. Can't stand foreigners."

He started toward a side door, turned, came back, and lifting her hand kissed it tenderly. "You're a splendid thing!" he said, very low. "I'm often a beast to you—but I love you—always."

He was gone. Sophy stood looking after him for some seconds; then she lowered her eyes to Amaldi's card, which she still held. She left the room with her head bent, thinking—thinking—



EGYPT

Illustrated by F. Matania

V

HE that died o' Wednesday
Is old as Pharaoh was,
Seeing life is vapor,
Seeing flesh is grass.
But grass comes back as cattle,
And clouds come back as rain;
So why should he and Pharaoh
Not come back again?

He that died o' Wednesday
Is finished with for aye,
Seeing life is ashes,
Seeing flesh is clay.
But ashes mend a footpath,
And clay can tamp a drain:
So why should he and Pharaoh
Not be used again?

EDITOR'S NOTE.—The charms of Egypt lie not altogether on the surface of the land. In this instalment of "Egypt of the Magicians," Mr. Kipling takes us below ground into the old tombs, and introduces us to some mighty interesting personages that his mood brings back from the almost vanished past.



T OF THE MAGICIANS *By Rudyard Kipling*

THE Swiss are the only people who have taken the trouble to master the art of hotel keeping. Consequently, in the things that really matter—beds, baths, and victuals—they control Egypt; and since every land always throws back to its aboriginal life (which is why the United States delights in telling aged stories), any ancient Egyptian would at once understand and join in with the life that roars through those nickel-plumbed tourist-barracks on the River, where all the world frolics in the sunshine. At first sight the show lends itself to cheap moralizing, till one recalls that one only sees busy folk when they are idle and rich folk when they have made their money. A citizen of the United States, his first trip abroad, pointed out a middle-aged Anglo-Saxon who was relaxing after the manner of several schoolboys.

"There's a sample!" said the Son of Hustle scornfully. "Tell me *he* ever did anything in his life!" Unluckily he had pitched upon one who, when he is in collar, reckons thirteen and a half hours a fairish day's work.

Among this assembly were men and women burned to an even blue-black tint—civilized people with bleached hair and sparkling eyes. They explained themselves as "diggers"—just diggers—and opened me a new world. Granted that all Egypt is one big undertaker's emporium, what could be more fascinating than to get government leave to rummage in a corner of it, to form a little company and spend the cold weather trying to pay dividends in the shape of amethyst necklaces, lapis-lazuli scarabs, pots of pure gold, and priceless bits of statuary? Or, if one is rich, what better fun than to grub-stake an expedition on the supposed site of a dead city and see what turns up? There was a big-game hunter who had used most of the continent, quite carried away by this sport.

"I'm going to take shares in a city, next year, and watch the digging myself," he said. "It beats elephants to pieces. In *this* game you're digging up dead things and making them alive. Aren't you going to have a flutter?"

He showed me a most seductive little

prospectus. Myself, I would sooner not lay hands on any dead man's kit or equipment, especially when he has gone to his grave in the belief that the trinkets guarantee salvation. Of course, there is the other argument, put forward by skeptics, that the Egyptian was a blatant self-advertiser and that nothing would please him more than the thought that he was being looked at and admired after all these years. Still, one might rob some shrinking soul who didn't see it in that way.

At the end of spring, the diggers flock back out of the Desert and exchange chaff and news on the gorgeous hotel verandas. For example, A's company has made a find of priceless stuff, heaven knows how old, and is—not too meek about it. Company B, less fortunate, hints that if only A knew to what extent their native diggers had been stealing and disposing of the thefts under their very archeological noses, they would not be so happy.

"Nonsense," says Company A. "Our diggers are above suspicion. Besides, we watched 'em!"

"Are they?" is the reply. "Well, next time you are in Berlin go to the Museum and you'll see what the Germans have got hold of. It *must* have come out of your ground. The Dynasty proves it." So A's cup is poisoned—till next year. No collector or curator of a museum should have any moral scruples whatever; and I have never met one who had, though I have been assured by deeply shocked informants of four nationalities that the Germans are the most flagrant pirates of all.

The business of exploration is about as romantic as earthwork on Indian railways. There are the same narrow-gauge trams and donkeys, the same shining gangs in the borrow-pits, and the same skirling, dark-blue crowds of women and children with the little earth-baskets. But the hoes are not driven in nor the clods jerked aside at random, and when the work fringes along the base of some mighty wall, men use their hands carefully. A white man—or he was white at breakfast—patrols through the continually renewed dust-haze. Weeks may pass without a single bead, but anything may turn up at any moment, and it is his to answer the shout of discovery.

We had the good fortune to stay awhile at the headquarters of the Metropolitan Museum (New York) in a valley riddled

like a rabbit-warren with tombs. Their stables, storehouses, and servants' quarters are old tombs; their talk is of tombs, and their dream (the diggers' dream always) is to discover a virgin tomb where the untouched dead lie with their jewels upon them. Four miles away are the wide-winged, rampant hotels. Here is nothing whatever but the rubbish of death that died thousands of years ago, on whose grave no green thing has ever grown. Villagers, expert in two hundred generations of grave robbing, cower among the mounds of waste and whoop at the daily tourist. Paths made by bare feet run from one half-tomb half-mud-heap to the next, not much more distinct than snail-smears, but they have been used since—

Time is a dangerous thing to play with. That morning, the *concierge* had toiled for us among steamer sailings, to see if we could save three days. That evening, we sat with folk for whom Time had stood still since the Ptolemies. I wondered, at first, how it concerned them, or any man, whether such and such a Pharaoh had used to his own glory the plinths and columns of such another Pharaoh before or after Melchisedec. Their whole background was too inconceivably remote for the mind to work on. But the next morning we were taken to the painted tomb of a noble—a minister of Agriculture—who died four or five thousand years ago. He said to me, in so many words: "Observe! I was very like your friend, the late Mr. Samuel Pepys, of your Admiralty. I took an enormous interest in life, which I most thoroughly enjoyed on its human and on its spiritual side. I do not think you will find many departments of State better managed than mine, or a better kept house, or a nicer set of young people. These are my daughters! The eldest, as you can see, takes after her mother. The youngest, my favorite, is supposed to favor me. Now, I will show you all the things that I did and delighted in till it was time for me to present my accounts elsewhere." And he showed me, detail by detail, in color and in drawing, his cattle, his horses, his crops, his tours in the district, his accountants presenting the revenue returns, and he himself, busiest of the busy in the good day.

But when we left that broad, gay anteroom and came to the narrower passage where once his body had lain and where all his

doom was portrayed, I could not follow him so well. I did not see how he, so experienced in life, could be cowed by friezes of brute-headed apparitions or satisfied by files of repeated figures. He explained, something to this effect:

"We live on the River—a line without breadth or thickness. Behind us is the Desert, which nothing can affect, whither no man goes till he is dead. (One does not use good agricultural ground for cemeteries.) Practically, then, we only move in two dimensions—up stream or down. Take away the Desert, which we don't consider any more than a healthy man considers death, and you will see that we have no background whatever. Our world is all one straight bar of brown or green earth, or, for some months, mere sky-reflecting water that wipes out everything. You have only to look at the Colossi outside to realize how enormously and extravagantly man and his work must scale in such a country. Remember, too, that our crops are sure and our life is very, very easy. Above all, we have no neighbors. That is to say, we must give out, for we cannot take in. Now, I put it to you: What is left for a priest with imagination, except to develop ritual and multiply gods on friezes? Unlimited leisure, limited space of two dimensions, divided by the hypnotizing line of the River, and bounded by visible, unalterable death—must, *ipso facto*—"

"Even so," I interrupted. "I do not comprehend your gods—your direct worship of beasts, for instance?"

"You prefer the indirect? The worship of Humanity with a capital H? My gods, or what I saw in them, contented me."

"What did you see in your gods as affecting belief and conduct?"

"You know the answer to the riddle of the Sphinx?"

"No," I murmured; "what is it?"

"All sensible men are of the same religion, but no sensible man ever tells," he replied. With that I had to be content, for the passage ended in solid rock.

There were other tombs in the valley, but the owners were dumb, except one Pharaoh, who, from the highest motives, had broken with the creeds and instincts of his country and had all but wrecked it. One of his discoveries was an artist who saw men not on one plane but modeled full or three-quarter face, with limbs suited to

their loads and postures. His vividly realized stuff leaped to the eye out of the acreage of low relief in the old convention, and I applauded as a properly brought-up tourist should.

"Mine was a fatal mistake," Pharaoh Ahkenaton sighed in my ear. "I mistook the conventions of life for the realities."

"Ah, those soul-crippling conventions!" I cried.

"You mistake *me*," he answered more stiffly. "I was so sure of their reality that I thought that they were really lies, whereas they were only invented to cover the raw facts of life."

"Ah, those raw facts of life!" I cried still louder; for it is not often that one has a chance of impressing a Pharaoh. "We must face them with open eyes and an open mind! Did you?"

"I had no opportunity of avoiding them," he replied. "I broke every convention in my land."

"Oh, noble! And what happened?"

"What happens when you strip the cover off a hornet's nest? The raw fact of life is that mankind is just a little lower than the angels, and the conventions are based on that fact in order that men may become angels. But if you begin, as I did, by the convention that men are angels, they will assuredly become bigger beasts than ever."

"That," I said firmly, "is altogether out of date. You should have brought a larger mentality, a more vital uplift, and—er—all that sort of thing to bear on—all that sort of thing, you know."

"I did," said Ahkenaton gloomily. "It broke me!" And he, too, went dumb among the ruins.

There is a valley of rocks and stones in every shade of red and brown, called the Valley of the Kings, where a little oil-engine coughs behind its hand all day long, grinding electricity to light the faces of dead Pharaohs a hundred feet underground. All down the valley, during the tourist season, stand char-à-bancs and donkeys and sand-carts, with here and there an exhausted couple who have dropped out of the processions, and glisten and fan themselves in some scrap of shade. Along the sides of the valley are the tombs of the kings, as it might be neatly numbered mining-adits with concrete steps leading up to them, and iron grilles that lock of



DRAWN BY F. MATANIA

Up and down these alleyways clatter all the races of Europe with a solid backing of the United States

nights, and doorkeepers of the Department of Antiquities demanding the proper tickets. One enters, and from deeps below deeps hears the voice of dragomans booming through names and titles of the illustrious and thrice-puissant Dead. Rock-cut steps go down into hot, still darkness; passages twist and are led over blind pits which, men say, the wise builders childishly hoped would be taken for the real tombs by thieves to come. Up and down these alleyways clatter all the races of Europe with a solid backing of the United States. Their footsteps are suddenly blunted on the floor of a hall paved with immemorial dust that will never dance in any wind. They peer up at the blazoned ceilings, stoop down to the minutely decorated walls, crane and follow the somber splendors of a cornice, draw in their breaths, and climb up again to the fierce sunshine to redive into the next adit on their program. What they think proper to say, they say aloud—and some of it is very interesting. What they feel, you can guess from a certain haste in their movements—something between the shrinking modesty of a man under fire and the hadn't-we-better-be-getting-on attitude of visitors to a mine. After all, it is not natural for man to go underground except for business or for the last time. He is conscious of the weight of Mother Earth overhead, and when to his expectant bulk is added the whole beaked, horned, winged, and crowned hierarchy of a lost faith flaming at every turn of his eye, he naturally wishes to move away. Even the sight of a very great king indeed, sarcophagused under electric light in a hall full of most fortifying pictures, does not hold him too long.

Some men assert that the crypt of St. Peter's, with only nineteen centuries bearing down on the groining and the tombs of early popes and kings all about, is more impressive than the Valley of the Kings because it explains how and out of what an existing creed grew. But the Valley of the Kings explains nothing except that most terrible line in "Macbeth,"

To the last syllable of recorded time.

Earth opens her dry lips and says it.

In one of the tombs there is a little chamber whose ceiling, probably because of a fault in the rock, could not be smoothed off like the others. So the decorator very

cunningly covered it with a closely designed cloth-pattern—just such a chintzlike piece of stuff as in real life one would use to underhang a rough roof with. He did it perfectly, down there in the dark, and went his way. Thousands of years later, there was born a man of my acquaintance who, for good and sufficient reason, had an almost insane horror of anything in the nature of a ceiling-cloth. He used to make excuses for not going into the dry-goods' shops at Christmas, when hastily enlarged annexes are hidden, roof and sides, with embroideries. Perhaps a snake or a lizard had dropped on his mother from a roof before he was born; perhaps it was the memory of some hideous fever-bout in a tent. At any rate, that man's idea of *The Torment* was a hot, crowded, underground room, underhung with patterned cloths. Once in his life, at a city in the far North where he had to make a speech, he met that perfect combination. They led him up and down narrow, crowded, steam-heated passages till they planted him, at last, in a room without visible windows (by which he knew he was underground) and directly beneath a warm-patterned ceiling-cloth—rather like a tent-lining. And there he had to say his say, while panic-terror sat in his throat. The second time was in the Valley of the Kings, where very similar passages, crowded with people, led him into a room, cut out of rock, fathoms underground, with what looked like sagging chintz cloth not three feet above his head.

"The man I'd like to catch," he said, when he came outside again, "is that decorator-man. D'you suppose he meant to produce that effect?"

Every man has his private terrors, other than those of his own conscience. From what I saw in the Valley of the Kings, the Egyptians seem to have known this, some time ago. They certainly have impressed it on most unexpected people. I heard two voices down a passage talking together as follows:

SHE: I guess we weren't ever meant to see these old tombs from inside, anyway.

HE: How so?

SHE: For one thing, they believe so hard in being dead. Of course, their outlook on spiritual things wasn't as broad as ours.

HE: Well, there's no danger of *our* being led away by it. Did you buy that alleged scarab off the dragoman this morning?

The next instalment of *Egypt of the Magicians* will appear in the November issue.



DRAWN BY WILLIAM A. ROTTINGER

"If you'd wax the tips of your mustache and had a *grain de beauté* right here"—she placed the tip of her dainty gloved finger below the corner of her mouth—"you could pass for him anywhere"

Braga's Double

Dominica Meduna, the unusual heroine of a series of startling adventures of which this is the first, has her own code of morals, elastic as to the property rights of others, rigid as to her own personal conduct. You will think her an extraordinary young woman; as she undoubtedly is, but do not form an opinion of her yet. Wait and see how she turns out. We venture to predict that her daring exploits will entertain Cosmopolitan readers mightily for some time to come. Henry C. Rowland is no newcomer to these pages, but we have not had as much of him as our readers wanted. Therefore, it is with much pleasure that we announce this new series, "The Adventures of Dominica."

By Henry C. Rowland

Illustrated by William A. Hottinger

SEÑOR EMILIO BRAGA arose and examined himself attentively in the mirror, but his motive was not one of vanity. The reflection portrayed a man of medium size and weight, with a face which a good many women had considered handsome. It was swarthy of tint, with stiff, black hair growing low on the forehead, dark and rather beady eyes, thin lips, and a pointed chin. His mustache was black, wiry, and waxed at the tips, and there was a conspicuous mole just below the left-hand corner of his mouth.

"It should not be difficult," said Braga, speaking as much to himself as to a very pretty young woman who was watching him curiously. "Fortunately, my type of beauty is not as rare as yours, my dear Nica. Find me an understudy who, under my name and in your company, will pass for myself for a few hours; let him take you to dine at Weber's, go afterward to the Moulin Rouge, and you will have earned five thousand francs."

Dominica shook her golden head.

"It is not so easy as you think, Emilio," said she. "Besides, even if I managed to find such a person and persuaded him to do all this, how do we know that he would keep his mouth shut, afterward?"

"He will keep his mouth shut for his own sake," said Emilio. "If he were to admit that he had been impersonating myself, he would be in great demand at the *préfecture*. That can be made clear to him afterward, when I shall have established my alibi."

Dominica nodded; her dark eyes glowed.

"Then you've made up your mind to kill Legrand?" she asked, a little breathlessly.

Braga shrugged. "What else is there to do?" he asked. "His price was twenty thousand francs, and I paid it. Now he wants five thousand more. He intends to keep that up until there's nothing left and then land us in the *Santé* and get his promotion." He glanced at himself again and twisted the tips of his mustache. "It may not be so easy, because, of course, he'll be on his guard. I don't dare try to get at him in disguise. He'd see me through a brick wall, and I'd never live to get within striking-distance. But he doesn't think that I'd dare tackle it in my own personality. In fact, he's warned me that, even if I should manage it, he's prepared a statement for the *préfecture*, admitting his blackmail and incriminating me."

"Then what's the use of killing him?" asked Dominica.

"Because he's got no proof. All he can do now is to limit our operations and milk us when we make a *coup*, like that of the other night. I expect to be arrested on suspicion, and acquitted when I prove my alibi. That's the reason why we must find my double. If we can manage it, all right. But we've got no time to lose."

"And if we can't?"

"Then good-by to another five thousand francs, and another and another until it's all gone. After that, he may wait until we pull off something else or else have up the lot of us. It depends on which he thinks might be worth the more to him. As it

is now, we're like the pelicans which the Chinese use to fish with. They send the bird into the school with a ring around its neck so that it can't swallow any of the fish, and when its pouch is full they make it disgorge. That's the way Legrand is working us. But the trouble is that, while, in most cases, it doesn't pay to kill the goose that lays the golden egg or the pelican that catches the fish, in Legrand's case it might. His record on the *dossier* at the *préfecture* is none too brilliant, and Lepine is beginning to smile at him upside down. So, go out, my dear, and find my double—like a good little friend."

As Braga was an Argentinian of Buenos Aires and Dominica an Italian from the Veneto, they usually spoke French together. Dominica called herself American, having emigrated with her parents to New York at the age of six. In New York she had remained until her twentieth year, when one "Gentleman" Joe had hurriedly turned over to her the equivalent of about ten thousand dollars in money and jewels, given her a note to Braga, and told her to "beat it for Paris," where he hoped to join her a little later. This rendezvous promised to be indefinitely postponed, "Gentleman" Joe having missed his connections and been obliged to make a short railway journey up the Hudson. Dominica had arrived safely in Paris, where she had been kindly received by Braga, whose ostensible business was that of specialist in South American promoting-schemes and whose actual occupation was that of "fence," or disposer of stolen goods.

For the past four years, Dominica had worked with Braga and certain of his clients and with such success that the money entrusted her by "Gentleman" Joe remained untouched in the bank, awaiting the renewal of his business activities. Dominica had made herself extremely useful to such deceased celebrities as "Count Ivan," "Chuchule Tondeur," and other members of this well-organized fraternity of thieves.

Dominica was admirably equipped for her occupation. Several years of service as a smart lady's-maid in a rich and fashionable household had trained and directed her natural talent for deception and intrigue. She had the fresh beauty of a guileless nymph, the mind of a Medici, and the moral sense of a yellow cat. She spoke with equal fluency English, French, and Spanish,

this latter tongue acquired in Buenos Aires, whither she had accompanied Braga on a business venture and remained a year. In the eyes of the French police, her profession was a slightly older one than that of theft, but the police were wrong. Dominica's private code of ethics was far removed from those of the courtesan.

Now, as she listened to Braga, her smooth forehead knit in a little frown. Deeds of violence had at times been associated with her criminal activities, but this was the first occasion on which she had been required to assist even indirectly at a deliberate murder. Dominica had no scruples so far as the police *agent*, Legrand, was concerned. As she saw it, the man was far worse than any thief and richly deserved to be put out of the way. What Dominica objected to was the method; first, because it seemed unwarrantably dangerous, and second, because she doubted that it was feasible.

"I don't think much of your plan, my friend," said she. "Ivan would never have worked it that way. He would have turned Legrand over to his *rôdeurs* and made it appear an *apache* job."

Braga drew down the corners of his mouth. "That's not worth while," said he. "To begin with, I've got nobody that dares tackle it. They're all afraid of Legrand, and have got it in their heads that he's invulnerable. I've got to do it myself. I know his movements, and it can be managed almost any night between nine o'clock and midnight. But it is indispensable to me to prove an alibi. The plan is this, to be precise: We must find a man who closely resembles me. You must persuade him to impersonate me. Tell him that your object is to have it thought that you are with your husband, whom he strongly resembles. While at dinner, arrange to have the *chasseur* bring him a note addressed in my name. Later, when at the Moulin Rouge, have some one telephone for Monsieur Braga and let him answer. Make it worth his while. Pay him, if necessary. Later, when the business comes out in the papers, he will not dare say anything, for his own sake. He can be given to understand that, if he opens his mouth, we will swear that he was an accomplice. Do you understand?"

Dominica nodded. "It will not be easy," said she, "but I can at least try. You South Americans all look something alike."

II

MR. LEMUEL TAYLOR, of El Paso, and Oajaca, Mexico, sat behind a small table in front of the Café de la Paix and consumed with unflagging relish his third drink of Bourbon whisky, while his keen, dark eyes missed no single note of the passing procession.

From the way in which they kindled at the transit of any particularly *chic* and seductive member of the sidewalk chorus now beginning to muster on the boulevard, it is to be inferred that Lemuel was feeling the need of feminine society. This was quite true. Lemuel was. Moreover, he felt that he was fully entitled to gratify this craving.

"Business before pleasure" had for many years been Lem's rigid motto, and he had observed it strictly, even in that pleasure-city, Paris. But now his business was successfully transacted, and he was the richer by several thousands of dollars. The bulk of the recent issue of stock by the new company of the Villa Alta Mining and Development Company had been subscribed for in behalf of their clients by MM. Rodriguez, Rosenthal, and Paff, bankers of the Rue Lafitte, and Lemuel was sailing the following day for southern Mexico, to resume his duties as superintendent of the mines.

Consequently, one may sympathize with him in his strongly rooted opinion that he was entitled to a certain amount of relaxation, the more so as Lemuel was quite alone in the world, with no responsibilities beyond the operation of the mines, in the full vigor of youth and health, and enjoying his first experience of European travel. For ten years he had slaved like any peon and had finally succeeded in bringing the efficiency of his plant up to a pitch where he could say with utter honesty: "Here's a good thing. Freeze onto it while you've got the chance, and you'll never regret it!"

So much for the business end. That was now closed, and Lemuel put it in the back of his brain for the hour and turned his mind to lighter things. He wanted a bit of a lark, but did not know precisely how to go about it. Vulgar adventures were not in his line. Responsibility and the weight of care had squashed all that sort of thing out of his system some years past, and what he now craved was romance with a large "R." Failing that, he would dine in some gay restaurant, go to a show, then to a cabaret,

then to bed, rising early to take the steamer-train for Cherbourg. He was about to settle his score and stroll on down the boulevard, when he saw approaching what impressed him as the most ravishing exponent of female loveliness which the gay city had so far presented to his admiring eyes.

It was evident enough, even to Lem's inexperienced eyes, that the girl approaching was not of the genus *grue* such as had been flocking past. She was exquisitely and expensively gowned, but free of paint and powder, and with none of the hard, searching gaze of the *boulevardière*. No dye or bleaching agent could have given that soft luster of ruddy gold to her hair, and her eyes were so blue as to be almost purple.

She was almost abreast of Lemuel when she happened to glance toward the corner where he sat behind the glass wind-shield. Their eyes met, and the Texan, though far from being a metropolitan and versed in the lures of city sirens, realized at once that her sudden change of expression was not affected. The look which flashed across her lovely features was startled, but sincere in its expression of shock, surprise, and a sudden eagerness. So much was natural, as Lem not only saw but felt. What immediately followed was art, coquetry—the lure which is ages old. Lemuel felt that, too. For, in the next brief instant, she seemed to hesitate, cast down her eyes, then looked again, and this time there lurked an invitation which one who ran might read.

Lem's nature was not such as required a man with a sharp stick to prod him into action. As quick as light he realized that the girl had taken him for an acquaintance, discovered her mistake, yet was puzzled to understand the striking resemblance, and might not be averse to having it explained. Here was Romance arrested in full flight. He found his feet with the suppleness of a cougar, looked at the girl, and smiled.

"I've been waiting for you as hard as I could," said he. "You're late."

He stepped out from behind his table. She hesitated for an instant, and it did not need the college education which he had never enjoyed to tell Lem that that, too, was art. Then, to his great surprise she answered him in perfectly good American,

"I took you for somebody else."

"Don't give it away," said Lem. "Come

sit down and tell me who you took me for? My twin brother, maybe. He's always doing nice things for me." He drew out a chair, and the girl slipped into it, then looked at him and smiled.

"I never saw anything like it," said she. "Who are you, anyhow?"

"Me? I'm a Spanish spy, if you want to know," said Lem. "Only don't tell anybody or I might get arrested." And to mystify her further, he said in Spanish, "Who did you think I was?"

She dropped her eyes, and then, to his astonishment, answered in the same tongue: "I thought that you were my husband, who is in Nice. If it weren't that you looked so much like him, I wouldn't dare sit here talking to you." She gave him another dazzling smile, then went on in English: "I'm sure you must be some relation. It can't be possible that two people who look so much alike are not of the same blood. Are you really American?"

"Well," said Lem, a little dazed, "I always thought I was, but perhaps I'm wrong. Is your husband Spanish?"

"Argentino," she answered. "I'm American myself."

"Well," said Lem, "we Americans ought to hang together. Can't I offer you something?"

"I'd like an orangeade," murmured Dominica.

The order was promptly given, with that of another "of the same" for Lemuel, who was beginning to wonder if it was absolutely necessary for good Americans to die before going to Paris.

"So you took me for your husband," said he. "Well, all I can say is I'm mighty sorry you found out your mistake. Say, what kind of a man is this little old husband of yours to hike out for Nice all by himself, when he's got a wife like you?"

Dominica looked down. "We had a quarrel," said she. "We hadn't been here in Paris very long when I found out that he was running around with a Frenchwoman. Yesterday, I told him what I thought about it, and he lost his temper and we had a fight. He packed his valise and said that he was going to Nice, and that he would stay there until he felt like coming back. I'm afraid that he's taken the woman with him."

"Well of all the ornery horned toads!" exclaimed Lemuel warmly. "Did he leave you anything to run on?"

"Oh, yes," she answered; "I've got money enough. It isn't that that's bothering me. But it's pretty lonely here all by myself. You see, Emilio—that's my husband—is with a firm here in Paris that imports South American goods, and, besides a few of his business acquaintances, I hardly know a soul. I've been walking around wondering what to do with myself, and when I saw you, just now, I thought for the moment that it was Emilio and that he hadn't gone at all—" She caught her breath and touched her eyes with a dainty handkerchief.

Lemuel's dark eyes kindled as they rested on her drooping figure. He observed the delicacy of her complexion, which was of an ivory texture with a faint color glowing through from underneath. His admiring and sympathetic gaze appreciated also her lithe, supple, and beautifully rounded figure, and he was conscious of a glow of righteous wrath against the recalcitrant Emilio. "Regular greaser trick!" thought Lemuel to himself. "Think of any man with the heart of a coyote going off and leaving a wife like that to wander around the streets of Paris like a stray maverick! And an American woman at that!"

Lemuel's first emotions gave way to those of protective chivalry. He intensely regretted that the pressure of his Mexican responsibilities made it absolutely necessary for him to return with all haste. He was not entirely unsophisticated, and he did not believe that the woman was an adventuress. The fact of her having informed him that she was well supplied with money and the naive way in which she had confided to him her trouble, had won his confidence. It seemed natural that an American woman in her position should turn to a fellow countryman for sympathy.

"Well," said he slowly, "it's pretty tough rations, and no mistake, but I guess it won't last long. Grea—hm—folks with Spanish blood are pretty apt to get hot and fly off the handle, but it don't usually last long. I guess you think quite a lot of him, don't you?"

She shook her pretty head. "Not after this," she answered. "Why should I?"

"You can search me," said Lemuel, rather relieved to discover this state of heart. "Why don't you pull out and go back to your folks?"

She shook her head. "They wouldn't

have me," she answered. "I ran away from a convent to marry Emilio. My father is an Italian importer in New York, and Emilio was one of his clerks. We went to Buenos Aires, first, and there Emilio got a start and came over here."

"Suppose he's gone for good?" Lemuel asked. "What will you do, then?"

She shrugged. "Oh, I'll get along, somehow. I've got a pretty good voice, and I can go on the stage. But I think he'll come back. The worst of it is waiting here with nothing to do and nobody to talk to."

"That does sort of take the good out of you," Lemuel admitted. "I've been up against the same proposition for the last two weeks, but I'm all through here, now, and fixing to sail for New York, to-morrow."

"To-morrow?" she asked, with a sudden lifting of her long lashes.

"Yes. Leaving St. Lazare at nine-thirty. Look here, Mrs.——"

"Braga," Dominica supplied.

"Thanks. Look here, Mrs. Braga, what if we sort of cheer each other up for the next few hours? My name's Taylor, and I'm a mining man over here to place some stock. We're both Americans, and I guess it ain't going to hurt anybody if we were to go to dinner in some nice, swell restaurant and take in the theater afterward. It'll take your mind off your trouble for a little while, and there's nothing I'd like better, believe me. How about it?"

Dominica appeared to hesitate. "You're very kind," said she doubtfully. "I'd love to, I'm sure—but I've been around a good deal with Emilio, and I'm afraid I might be recognized."

"Well," said Lemuel, "if I'm such a dead ringer for your husband that I fooled you for a minute, I don't believe that anybody else is apt to know the difference."



Half-way down the alley, a man stepped from a black doorway and awaited his approach

She looked at him and laughed.

"If you'd wax the tips of your mustache and had a *grain de beauté* right here"—she placed the tip of her dainty gloved finger below the corner of her mouth—"you could pass for him anywhere," said she.

"Oh, I guess the barber can fix the mustache all right," said Lemuel, "but what's a *grain de beauté*?"

"A mole—but that's easy enough. All you need to do is to stick on a little square of black court-plaster. But we'd have to speak Spanish. Emilio and I usually speak Spanish."

"That's easy," said Lemuel. "I don't speak much of anything else for about twelve months in the year. Say, what's that for a game, anyhow? Listen—" he leaned toward her and fixed his dark eyes on her blue ones—"if I can't play this husband game better than Emilio for the next several hours, why you can just have me iced up and shipped back to Oajaca as a dead one—see?"

III

AGENT GASTON LEGRAND, of the secret police, slipped unobtrusively along the Rue de Flandre and turned into an *impasse*, or blind alley, which was closed by a ten-foot wall on the edge of the Canal St. Denis.

Half-way down the alley, a man stepped from a black doorway and awaited his approach. Legrand halted.

"*Eh bien*," said he, "have you located our man?"

"Sure," said the other, "and there you are! But he's not where you expected him. For what time was the rendezvous?"

"Half-past ten," snapped Legrand, "and it's precisely that now. Where is he?"

"He's at the Moulin Rouge, enjoying the show with his pretty friend, *la belle Nica*—or, at least, he was when I telephoned about two minutes ago."

"At the Moulin Rouge?" growled Legrand. "What's that you're singing me?"

"It's a fact," said the other. "He dined with Nica at Weber's, and they went afterward to the Moulin Rouge, where they've been ever since. Being unable to locate him this morning, Fernand shadowed the girl all day. At quarter to seven, she came out of her apartment, dressed for the evening, and took a taxi to the Grand Hotel, where Braga came out and joined her and

they went to Weber's to dine, going afterward to the Moulin Rouge."

"*Sapristi!*" snarled Legrand. "You are sure that there is no mistake?"

"Impossible. Fernand knows Braga when he sees him. Besides, he told me that he was sitting at an adjoining table during an *entr'acte* when the *chasseur* came and said that Monsieur Braga was wanted at the telephone."

Legrand muttered an oath and bit at the side of his thick thumb. The situation was beyond him. Braga himself had arranged the rendezvous for the purpose of handing over five thousand francs of hush-money. Having made the agreement, why should he get the *agent* down there in that out-of-the-way corner of La Villette and then go calmly to the Moulin Rouge with the girl? Legrand was puzzled and enraged. It was impossible, he argued, that Braga could have guessed his actual design.

For Legrand, carefully weighing the pros and cons, had decided to do just what the astute Argentino had anticipated—to wring the neck of his pelican. His criminal instinct had warned the policeman that the situation was in danger of getting beyond his control. He was not afraid of any mischance at the hands of Braga for, besides being an utterly fearless man physically, Legrand despised the South American. But some sixth sense told him that the *préfecture* was beginning to regard him askance, and he had a disagreeable feeling that he was under careful espionage. He not only did not want to go to jail but he valued his position, and was eager for the promotion which had for some time been due him, but to obtain which he felt that some brilliant *coup* would be required.

Legrand now felt that the blackmail extorted from Braga was no longer worth the man's conviction. His actual proof against the "fence" was not adequate to secure this, but he was convinced that Braga's arrest in the act of handing over a large sum of blackmail would be sufficient. The café where he had arranged to meet Braga was but a few yards distant, and two of his men were waiting there behind a screen in a rear room to collect evidence and make the arrest.

It was possible, however, that Braga was merely tardy. It would take him but a few minutes to jump into a taxi and run down to the Rue de Flandre. Legrand turned to his sleuth.

"Go back to the Café de l'Abattoir and telephone again to Fernand," said he. "If he tells you that Braga has left, station yourself out of sight, at the head of the *impasse*. If he is still there, come back and tell me."

"Very good," said the man, and slunk off in the shadow. Legrand stepped back against the wall and waited.

With his broad shoulders leaning lightly against the crumbling cement, the policeman was possessing his soul in such patience as he had at his command, when a peculiar shudder passed through him. It was not due to the dank chill from the canal; neither was it one of those ordinary little discharges of nerve-impulse common to everybody at certain times and which have given rise to the saying that somebody is walking over one's grave. The shiver which went through Legrand was purely nervous rather than muscular, and accompanied by a curious sense of dread.

He had not, however, the time to reflect on the phenomenon. Scarcely had it passed when a small piece of cement fell upon his shoulder, and the start occasioned by this trivial thing was all that saved the policeman's life. Something whirled beneath the angle of his heavy jaw, brushing it lightly, and there came the clang of metal against the masonwork of the wall. Sparks flew, and a piece of shining steel tinkled on the pavement.

An Eben Slade could scarcely have drawn his weapon quicker than did Legrand. As he flung it up, there came a scraping sound from the top of the wall, followed by a shock and a jar on the farther side. The wall itself was about seven feet in height, and Legrand was up and across the top of it in time to see a dark figure dive behind a heap of rubbish, twenty feet away. Lying on his stomach, the policeman fired and heard his bullet strike iron and sing off into space. An answering flash leaped out from behind the rubbish-heap, and Legrand's eyes were filled with powdered cement. He squirmed back and dropped into the alley, and none too soon, for a second bullet hummed through the air in the place where his head had been a second before.

The door of the dingy café where his two men were stationed burst violently open and the pair rushed out into the alley. Legrand stepped back, gouging the cement from his smarting eyes with his thick forefinger. He was doing this, and growling like a wounded

boar, when the man whom he had sent to telephone came hurrying up.

"Braga and the girl have just left the Moulin Rouge," said he. "They suspected Fernand and tried to give him the slip, but, as luck would have it, they took Fernand's taxi, which Leclerc is driving. Fernand is waiting to learn from Leclerc where he has taken them."

"*Nom d'un chien!*" growled Legrand. "*Nom d'un nom d'un nom!*"

IV

LEMUEL was having a thoroughly good time. In fact, the only disagreeable feature, so far, had been the too obvious interest taken in his charming companion and himself by a ferret-faced person who planted himself at the next table to Nica and himself (for they had reached the "Lem" and "Nica" stage of sympathetic understanding) whenever they went out to fortify their systems against the surpassing dullness of the show. Lem did not care to look at the stage, and begrudged the time thus wasted when he might have been looking at Nica.

Up to the moment when the interest of the ferret-faced individual struck him as obnoxious, Lem had never spent such a delightful evening. After putting Nica in her taxi in front of the Café de la Paix, he had gone back into the hotel, taken a bath, dressed with care and in a manner befitting a successful promoter, and then, reflecting that Nica had enjoined upon him the necessity of waxing the tips of his wiry black mustache and putting on a beauty-spot, he summoned the highly intelligent barber and had his wants dextrously supplied.

Nica appeared charmed with the result, and her approval was, to tell the truth, entirely sincere. She had already discovered to her surprise that two men might have the mutual resemblance of twins, so far as physical traits were concerned, and yet one of them be strikingly handsome and the other distinctly ugly. Such was the comparison she made between Lemuel and Braga. Perhaps it was in some subtlety of feature or perhaps in expression alone that the difference lay, but the fact remained that Lemuel would have been considered by any just critic a keen, resolute, forceful, and kindly man merely from a glance at his face, while Braga would have been assayed by

the same test as treacherous, cruel, cowardly at heart, but dangerous withal. Nica found herself wondering what she could ever have admired in Braga.

Now Lemuel, despite his lack of practise, had certainly a way with women. His chivalrous deference contained an audacity which, though bold, was never rude, while he was as full of magnetism as it is possible for a one-man-power dynamo to be and of which much executive work had taught him to apply the potential force. Their dinner was not half over before Nica was beginning to vibrate under the strong induction-current which flowed through the gentleman from Texas, and, when on their way to Montmartre, Lemuel made bold to approach his labial electrodes to hers, Nica's quivering lips received a succession of shocks which seriously menaced Braga's plans. She managed to remember, however, that her colleague must even at that moment be waiting in ambush for Legrand, and so insisted on proceeding to the Moulin Rouge despite Lemuel's entreaties for a prolongation of the *tête-à-tête*.

It was during the first entr'acte that Lemuel began to notice the attentions of Legrand's spy. Nica had already observed them and was worried thereat. She suspected the true character of the man, and, fearing lest her companion might betray his true identity, would have liked to leave the place, but doubted that she could shake him off their trail. When they resumed their seats, she whispered to Lemuel,

"Did you notice that man who was staring at us from the next table?"

"That gopher-faced lizard? You bet. I'd twist his neck for two pesetas."

"Don't you think of such a thing!" said Nica. "I'm afraid it's somebody that knows my husband by sight and isn't quite sure about you. I wish we could give him the slip."

"I'll slip him one in the neck if he doesn't change his gait," snapped Lemuel.

"Do you want to get me in a lot of trouble?" Nica implored. "We must be very careful. Don't speak a word of English. This is what we must do: Nearly at the end of this act I'll go out alone and get into a taxi. I'll tell the chauffeur where to go and promise him twenty francs to make his best speed. As soon as the act is over, slip out and join me, and we'll dash off."

"Where shall we dash to?" Lemuel asked.

"We'll go to a little café where I've been several times with Emilio. I want to be sure that we're not followed before going anywhere else. Emilio may not have gone to Nice at all. He may be right here in Paris and have a spy watching me."


Lemuel reflected for an instant. It occurred to him that very possibly his fair companion might have it in her pretty head to give him the slip as well as the spy. But even if that were the case, he had no right to hinder her, and, as a Southern gentleman, he was bound to do his utmost to keep from compromising a lady.

"All right," said he. "Whatever you say goes."

A few minutes later, Nica got up and went out. There was a single taxi waiting, drawn up to the curb directly in front of the entrance, and if Nica had stopped to think, she might have realized that this position was irregular. Had she been even more observant, she might have seen the ferret-faced individual step from a shadow and make an affirmative sign to the chauffeur, who promptly got down and opened the door. Nica gave the man his instructions, at which the chauffeur touched the vizzor of his cap, and, starting his motor, moved slightly ahead to come to a halt a few yards farther on, the motor turning over slowly. Nica had stepped into a *préfecture* taxi which was driven by a policeman!

A few minutes later, Lemuel came quickly out upon the street and, catching sight of Nica's gesture from the window, got into the taxi, which started swiftly ahead. The theaters were not yet out, and there was but little traffic, and the rate of speed at which they sped down the broad boulevard brought shrill, peremptory whistles and sharp commands to halt from the different policemen which they passed, to all of which their chauffeur paid not the slightest heed. They dipped presently into a side street and shot down a hill at such a rate that Lemuel felt called upon to brace his feet against the front of the car and hold his companion firmly in both sinewy arms to prevent her from being dashed against the glass. A sudden jolt and swerve, as their driver took a corner on two wheels, bringing their faces suddenly together, the perils of the position were entirely ignored.

"This boy is sure earning his twenty francs!" gasped Lemuel. "Go to it, son! You can't turn my stomach!"



A small piece of cement fell upon his shoulder, and the start occasioned by this trivial thing was all that saved the policeman's life

As a matter of fact, the policeman-chauffeur saw absolutely no objection to picking up a louis or two purely in the line of duty, and decided to give good measure. In an incredibly short time he deposited the pair at the door of a none too reputable café in the La Villette quarter, not very far from the place where Señor Braga had missed his *coup de théâtre*, not fifteen minutes earlier in the evening.

Lemuel assisted Nica to alight, then handed the chauffeur two louis. Lemuel had enjoyed his ride and felt generous.

"Go on—quickly," said Nica.

The man touched his cap and glided down the ill-lit street to turn the corner and return to the Moulin Rouge nearly as fast as he had come. Taxis are quicker as a rule than the Parisian telephone service. He might have saved his time, for Legrand had called off the hounds and gone home to bed in disgust. His *coup* had failed.

"Come into the café," said Nica. "We will drink a glass of beer and then go. Speak Spanish."

They went inside and seated themselves at a table. Nica ordered beer and, while the *patron* was fetching it, Lemuel glanced about

the place, wondering to himself why the girl should have brought him to such a dingy establishment. Nica, as though reading his thoughts, looked at him with a smile.

"No spy would think of looking for me here," said she. "If we'd gone to one of the well-known places, he might have located us again. It's too bad to have our evening spoiled like this—" she sighed.

"Oh, this little old whirl ain't over yet, by a long shot!" said Lemuel, in his Southwestern drawl. "Why it's only just midnight——"

"Speak Spanish," whispered Nica.

"Those men in the corner are watching us."

Lemuel twisted about in his chair, and his aquiline gaze fastened itself on a trio at a table in the farther corner of the room. The café was a rendezvous for a certain stratum of the underworld which was not disposed to complain of faulty illumination, and, in the vague light, Lemuel was able to distinguish only that the men were of olive complexion and looked like Armenians or Greeks or Levantines of some sort. They appeared to be well dressed, and on the finger of one who was gesticulating slightly, there sparkled a diamond which, from its luster, might have been a stone of the first water.

But that which held Lemuel's attention was the obvious fact that he and his companion were evidently the object of the argument, and the speaker, a muscular, hook-nosed man, was making no effort to disguise this fact. His companions, on the contrary, appeared to be trying to quiet him, and as Lemuel's eyes rested on the group, he saw one of them twitch at his sleeve and jerk his head sideways at the sleepy *patron* of the place, a thickly built brigand who was dosing behind his desk.

Nica did not recognize any of the three, but had Braga happened to enter at that moment, he would have taken but one look and beat a most expeditious retreat. For the individual thus under badly suppressed excitement was none other than "*Toni le Rat*," a thief of no mean ability though yet some distance from the head of his profession, whom, some three years before, Braga had shamefully swindled in the disposition of certain jewels. Toni had been arrested a day or two later and deported to Cayenne, and it is possible that Braga might have thrown some light upon the circumstances leading to his apprehension. At any rate, Toni was of opinion that he could, and was exceedingly desirous to hear what Braga might have to say about it.

The chances are that Toni might have postponed his inquisition, under pressure from his associates, had it not been for the extremely belligerent expression which spread over the features of the supposed Braga as their gaze conflicted. Toni was a Corsican and had been drinking what passes for *marc de vin* in La Villette. On the other hand, Lemuel was beginning to weary of espionage, and the gleam from his eyes, as

they met the glare streaming from those of the Corsican, contained about as much menace as can be contained in the human gaze.

For Lemuel was of that type of man always ready, at an instant's notice, to turn from the adoration of Venus to a sacrifice to Mars. With him, a kiss was first cousin to a blow in the opposite direction, and he was beginning to feel that he was being badgered out of a very delightful adventure. What with spies and taxi flights, and then the apparent objection of some bandit of the genus greaser to the presence of a swell in his filthy joint, Lemuel felt that he was not getting a square deal and was strongly inclined to resent it. His time in Paris was limited.

Wherefore he threw into the piercing gaze which he bent upon Toni all of the ocular abuse and threat which it is possible for a pair of iron-colored eyes to hold, and it hit the Corsican like a stream of well-directed saliva. Toni flung aside the restraining grasp of his companions, and, slipping out of his chair, crossed the room to where Lemuel and Nica were sipping their beer at a table near the door. As the light struck down upon his venomous face, Lemuel strongly regretted the vanity which had prevented his letting the weight of his gun interfere with the hang of his trousers. But he sat tight and fastened the advancing Toni with the bleak glare of a Cordillera eagle.

Had Toni's brain been less inflamed with *marc*, Toni would probably have discovered his mistake and retired with a muttered apology, but, as it was, he paused in front of Lemuel and launched into a torrent of violent abuse. He spoke French of the penal-colony *argot*, and Lemuel, though quite unable to understand a word, did not bother to send for an interpreter. He had encountered that sort of thing from greasers many times before, and was quite familiar with the proper course of procedure. At the first violent gesture, which consisted of four dirty fingers shaken almost against his nose, Lemuel was up and out of his chair like a scalded cat, and his fist landed on the point of Toni's chin with a force which sent the Corsican sprawling backward across a table directly behind him, and so to the floor.

But Toni's reinforcements were there on the right and left flank. Lemuel, skilled in frontier warfare, swung his lithe body to



DRARY BY WILLIAM A. HOTTINGER

It is doubtful if in all Paris there could have been found a man better trained by instinct and experience in this particular variety of warfare than was he

one side to let the knife slip under his arm and chug into the wooden column at his shoulder. The man who had flung it followed his throw, and Lemuel, ducking like a wrestler, gripped him by the waist and, taking advantage of his momentum, dashed him clean over his head and against the wall. But in doing so his foot slipped on the tiled floor, and before he could recover himself, the third man had him by the throat and slipped his fingers up to gouge for the eyes. Lemuel opened his mouth, found it full of greasy fingers and bit to the bone, then writhed from underneath and sprang to his feet, kicking like a struggling steer as he rose.

Taut and nicely balanced, he was barely in time for Toni's rush, but managed to evade it by throwing himself down again across the body of the man from whose strangling hold he had just got clear. Toni went across the two of them and, agile as he was, Lemuel was the fraction of a second quicker to gain his feet. It is doubtful if in all Paris there could have been found a man better trained by instinct and experience in this particular variety of warfare than was he. As Toni struggled up, a heavy bottle, known as a "*canelle*," crashed down across his forehead, gashed him to the eyes, and stretched him senseless and bleeding on the tiles.

But this did not finish the fight. The other two were far from disabled, and, as they scrambled to their feet, the bulky *patron*, who had worked out from behind his desk, rushed forward, meaning to fling himself between the combatants. Lemuel, distrusting his intention, met this dove of peace with a smashing blow on the angle of the jaw. And then, according to all of the rules of this variety of sport, and meaning to lose no point in his favor, he whipped up his chair and smote right and left with no particular reference to sect, color, or nationality.

He was thus interestingly occupied when there came a tug at his sleeve.

"Quick!" cried Nica. "Hurry—the police are coming! I've got a taxi!"

Lemuel, who had never for a second lost his head, despite the violence of his exercises, slipped out the door after the girl. A taxi was standing at the curb, its motor humming like a top.

"*Place de l'Opéra—deux cents francs—vite!*" hissed Nica.

V

SEÑOR EMILIO BRAGA was not particularly surprised when, while taking his coffee the following morning, he was politely informed that he was under arrest. For some time he had been expecting something of the sort, and it was rather a relief to have the suspense over with.

But, although he was careful not to show it, he was distinctly surprised to learn that the charge against him was that of being drunk and disorderly in a café known as "*Le Bœuf Gras*" in La Villette, and of assaulting the *patron* thereof and certain clients. The said clients had seen fit to withdraw their complaints, but the *patron* demanded a thousand francs' damages for injuries inflicted on his own person and his stock in trade.

Braga did not contest the claim. He acknowledged penitently that sometimes, when flushed with wine, his tropical blood was apt to boil at some fancied insult to himself or the lady he happened to be with, and that, at such moments, he was not entirely master of himself. On this particular occasion, being nervous on account of certain business affairs, he might have drunk too much champagne at dinner *chez* Weber and afterward at the Moulin Rouge.

Nica did not appear the following day to claim her five thousand francs, as Braga had suspected that she might. He had no intention of settling the score because he had failed in his attempt, but he was anxious to see Nica and compare notes. When finally they met, some days later, Braga said, with a sneer:

"So here you are again! I was beginning to fear that you might have eloped with my double."

Nica's red lip curled. "Your double!" she echoed. "Why, you dirty South American greaser, he's more than your quadruple! They say it takes nine tailors to make a man, but, if it does, it would take about ninety-nine like you to make one Taylor like my Lem! Go chase yourself; you make me tired!"

And Nica slammed the door in Braga's snarling face.

The Rajah's Tunic, the next *Dominica Meduna* story, will appear in the November issue.



When the River Ran White

Readers of *Cosmopolitan* have not forgotten a story called "Cassidy," published some months back. They have not let us forget it, either, for they have asked persistently for more of Larry Evans' work, because, as they noted, its peculiarly moving quality and fine sentiment had made a lasting impression. We remarked at the time that we regarded this young writer distinctly as a "comer" in American fiction—an opinion that will be confirmed by this intensely dramatic tale of the primitive passions that always rule beyond the borders of civilization.

By Larry Evans

Illustrated by Anton Otto Fischer

WE sat with the red of a setting sun in our faces and the droning hum of the river below us, an unceasing, monotonous murmur upon our ears. Singing River ran full to the banks—a smooth, shimmering tide of sleek, black water, irresistible and wickedly flecked with white.

Opposite us, to the north, across from Father Le Fèvre's little cabin that topped the rise above the Basin, the snow-veneered ridges were already blotched with brown. They were spotted, here and there, with great, bare places, where the south wind had cut away the rotting crust and ice.

It was spring in Singing River, and the river was running white, humming to itself as it shot southward a bass-pitched chant of challenge, of defiance, and even a hint of death—the spring song of Singing River which had given the river its name.

We sat with the red of the setting sun in our faces and the open door of Father Le Fèvre's cabin at our backs—sat silent. We had been quiet for a long time. Yet, at that, I knew almost to a word, even before the priest of Singing River had opened

his lips, the words he was about to speak.

"I am afraid of the river," he said slowly. "Always I am afraid of the river—when it runs white like that. Always, each spring, it comes back to me—that dread—and it brings back again with it a more and more vivid recollection of the first spring when I saw it, full to the banks. By that alone, *mon ami*, I know that I grow old. For old men remember most vividly the days when they were hard in the thighs and flat beneath the buckles of their belts.

"But it is another story that I want to tell you, *m'sieur*, just another tale of this Singing River of mine. Old men grow garrulous—and me, *m'sieur*, I like to talk, too."

He hesitated at this point just a barely perceptible instant, staring back at the river below us. Then he recommenced and went on and on, steadily, half absent-mindedly, as was his custom, talking as much to himself as to me.

"It was just another night like this, not much warmer and little, if any, later, when Conahan's messenger rode in and delivered

his message to me. Perhaps there was a bit more snow in the timber—a little more ice in the back-brush, but the roads were hock-deep in mud, and the wind was already in the south. The man's horse was well-nigh blown, and crusted thick with spatter.

"And the river was up—up as you see it now—sliding, black and dangerous, beneath its blanket of spume. It was singing a little, too—crooning to itself. I had been sitting alone for hours, here before this cabin of mine, and listening to it—listening and fearing it—and trying to translate the foreboding which it awoke in me into terms of reason, and failing each time I tried. That was thirty years and more back, *m'sieur*, my first spring on the border.

"The messenger found me here and told me his errand almost before he had slipped from his saddle. He was tired—quite as tired as the beast that bore him, for he had been two days and over on the trail. Conahan's main camp was on the south branch that year, a full twenty-four hours from here, as the mallards fly, and double that by way of the Beckett road and the river.

"Conahan needed me, *m'sieur*. He sent word that he needed me sorely. *Oui*, I smile a little as I tell it now, at the thought of that man who could read in the very list of the tree-tops the secret of next week's weather, needing the help of me, whom he had had to lead about, almost by the hand, for months after I had come here—come myself to teach! *M'sieur*, do you know, I grew less conceited that first year, grew to think a little less of my own excellences, just from watching my man Conahan swing an ax—just from watching him light a fire, when the woods were sodden with storms.

"But that was the message he sent, and it was urgent. All winter he had been in the timber with his men—two hundred and more of them—and all winter he had kept them contented and well. And now—now when the snow was going off like magic, and the river was already growling soft in its throat, and he was counting the hours before he could move his logs, a crisis had come that promised to leave him without a riverjack to man the rapids.

"For weeks they had been growing uneasy—those rivermen. The warm wind and warmer rain were getting into their veins; they were snuffing the smoke of their own fires, and—*oui*, I must admit it—some of

them already fingering in imagination their winter's wages and snuffing, too, Jean Coteau's white whisky, which, *m'sieur*, was far worse than any man might hope to describe.

"Each year it was always like that, but always, before now, Conahan had been able to hold them until the drive was over. And now—now there was a panic in that south-branch camp, which might break out any moment into an insane stampede.

"And it was a quite simple thing, too—so simple! Almost any crisis is, at first. Just one little case of the measles. In the morning, it had been nothing but a faint, red streak across the sick man's face, so faint that it was almost unnoticeable, and yet it had caused whispered comment among the rest. But when, by evening, it had become an ugly rash that crusted his face from chin to hair, those whispers had grown to a hoarse murmur—and that man sat alone at his end of the table in the cook-shanty that night.

"*M'sieur*, it was the scourge they feared, the smallpox that had made pest-houses of more than one winter camp. And while they huddled back into the corners of that room, shunning him and talking gutturally in their throats, the fear of it, that never left them, grew and grew.

"They would have deserted the camp that night in a body, only Conahan was there in the doorway when that first mad rush started. And he stopped them, first with his fists upon the faces of those who reached him first, and then with his voice alone. Sometimes, I believe that there is perhaps some virtue in being able to swear as could Conahan. It—it almost seemed like an accomplishment in him.

"He checked them. He drove them back. And then, with the bulk of his shoulders filling the door, he told them what it was. *M'sieur*, they almost believed him, and that is very remarkable, for they were wild with terror. They almost believed—but they remained only because he would not let them depart. And then he spoke my name to them; he promised them that I should come and tell them that he spoke the truth. And they promised to wait.

"That was the burden of the words which that mud-stained messenger delivered to me, almost before he had lifted his stiff body from the saddle. And while he was still talking, I, too, rose and made my

preparations. He wanted to go back with me, and I would not let him, of course.

"Jean Coteau saddled my horse for me and held him while I mounted. He even pressed a flask into my hand, before he murmured, '*Bon voyage*,' and I took it, to please him. He was big in heart, Jean Coteau, and bad as was that whisky, *m'sieur*, he had faith in it, which, after all, was something.

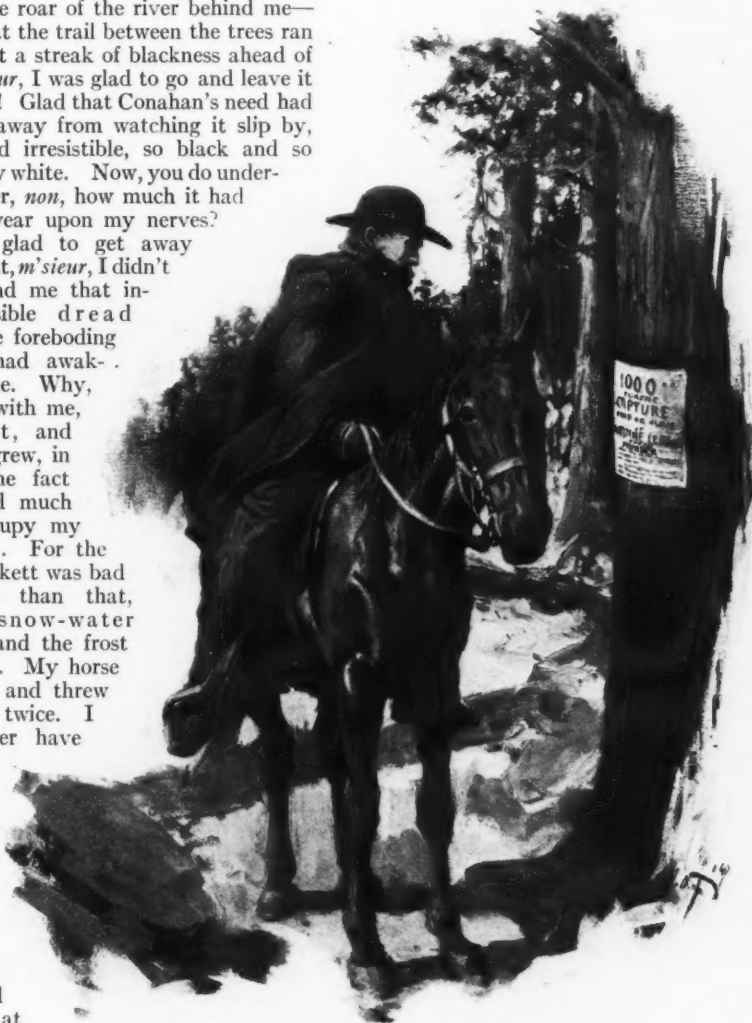
"It was dark when I went up the slope, back of us yonder, into the Beckett road, and left the roar of the river behind me—so dark that the trail between the trees ran nothing but a streak of blackness ahead of me. *M'sieur*, I was glad to go and leave it—the river! Glad that Conahan's need had called me away from watching it slip by, smooth and irresistible, so black and so dangerously white. Now, you do understand better, *non*, how much it had begun to wear upon my nerves?

"I was glad to get away from it—but, *m'sieur*, I didn't leave behind me that incomprehensible dread and strange foreboding which it had awakened in me. Why, that went with me, that night, and grew and grew, in spite of the fact that I had much else to occupy my attention. For the trail to Beckett was bad and worse than that, with the snow-water seeping in and the frost coming out. My horse went down and threw me heavily, twice. I might better have watched the road than to have tried to solve my state of mind.

"And yet all night it squirmed me—rode at my elbow. *M'sieur*, will you

believe me when I tell you that, ere daylight, I had almost come to believe that I was riding, not because Conahan's need had called me out but because a far greater Something had planned it?

"I've told you that it was dark—that the trail was bad. I had not learned then, either, how much more road-wise a horse usually is than the man who rides him, and I tried to make speed. That was the reason



"There was a reward offered by that card, a reward in the name of the law, and below it that which had seemed to hit me fairly between the eyes"

that I was more than twelve hours on the road before the outer fringe of Beckett's roofs began to show ahead through the timber—almost noon when my jaded mount shied suddenly at something white at the roadside, and I drew him up to examine it.

"It was a placard tacked breast-high upon a tree—just a big oblong of white cardboard, still new and unstained by the weather. But, *m'sieur*, my own spirit shied, too, and seemed to edge away from it, just as my horse had done, when my eyes went, instinctively I think, to one black-typed word that stood out among all the rest. There was a reward offered by that card, a reward in the name of the law, and below it that which had seemed to hit me fairly between the eyes.

"A thousand dollars' reward, it offered—a thousand for the apprehension, dead or alive, of one Antoine Le Beau, murderer—and it described the man. Little, it said he was, little and dapper and womanishly handsome, yet wiry, too, and—and deadly swift with his weapons. Also, it remarked his black hair and smooth, olive skin and little close-cropped mustache. It was not the first of its kind I had seen along the trails—scarcely that—so you can see how deeply it sank home, that morning. I remember it as if it were yesterday, and it really was years ago.

"I sat and stared at it, and wondered why it made my spine creep, until my horse went forward upon his own accord and recalled to me my need for haste. And I let him go till he stopped again before the door of the only public house in Beckett. I cannot remember the name of the man who kept that place, but I'll never forget the way he tried to brush some of the mud and slush from me with his own hands. It—it was a quite hopeless effort, but it meant much, is that not so?

"His name is gone from me, but, like Coteau's, his heart was good. And with his own hands he served me my dinner, before he went again to take his place behind the bar in the outer room. I ate, too—ate, because a hungry man cannot look too closely at his food or the plate that holds it. And I hurried, for Conahan's message was urgent, but my thoughts were not of the panic in that up-river camp. It was Antoine Le Beau that I pondered—little and dapper and womanishly handsome—and swift with his weapons, *m'sieur*. He—he

sat across from me while I dined; I couldn't get rid of his image—till I was glad to rise and go back into the noisy barroom.

"That room had been filled with the hoarse hum of many voices while I ate. Now, they hushed as I appeared and went up to the bar; they became quiet. All those men tilted back against the walls, but I knew of what they had been conversing. *Oui*, you know, too, *m'sieur*. Oh, that card on the trail was not so old—not so old, even when its age was reckoned in hours!

"It grew so quiet that there was not one of them but what heard me when I asked the proprietor, who was my host, for a fresh mount and a guide to show me the mouth of the south-branch trail. They leaned forward and drank in eagerly each word when I related Conahan's trouble, and they smiled and nodded when I told how he had handled the crisis—all but the man to whom I was speaking. His face grew grave.

"'A horse!' he echoed my words after me. '*Parbleu*, Father, there ees not a horse in the stable but ees at your service. But—but you are not thinking of pushing on to-day?'

"His astonishment was very great—greater when I told him that I must.

"'But you cannot make eet by sundown,' he protested, and his hands were far more eloquent than his lips. 'But no! Why, eet ees ten hours, mebbly a leetle more, even when the trail is light for travel! And now'—he shrugged his shoulders—'now, mebbly fifteen—mebbly a horse with hees leg broke, for sure!'

"It left me silent for a moment, his objection did, for I had not known how much of the journey still lay before me.

"'There is no place along the road?' I asked him, then. 'No cabin where I could find shelter?'

"He stood and looked at me long and steadily, with the room even more quiet behind me. And while he seemed to be framing his words, some one else spoke up—a man in red-and-black checked shirt, who was little more than a stripling.

"'You could give him a letter of introduction to old man Beauchampbeau,' he chuckled. 'Beauchampbeau's roof is tight.'

"I turned quickly toward the speaker and saw the laughter, too, in his eyes. He—he was but a boy, and his spirits were high, no doubt. But there was no answering mirth in the eyes of the master of the place. He scowled blackly across at the

youth in the corner. And when he lifted his eyes to me, they had in them an unspoken plea for pardon for the boy's levity.

"There ees no place, Father," he repeated gravely. "No cabin—" and he paused to qualify his words—"where you could find shelter. But eef you must go, then you must. So I will give you a blanket and food to eat. There ees still much snow in the woods, but the nights are warm. You could manage a fire, too, mebbly?"

"Once more he rebuked the boy with his scowl, and went to bring my horse. *M'sieur*, I have often wondered since—do you believe that he suspected I did not want to chance his hospitality? Well, I hope not, and, at least, he did not show it. I stood there in the open door, waiting for him to reappear and puzzled over the words of that boy in the red-and-black shirt. He had smiled over his suggestion, but it seemed a quite footless sort of a joke, *non?* I could make little of it, or the proprietor's quick displeasure, but when he came again, leading a fresh horse, I fell in beside him, and before we had reached the trail to which he was leading me, I had put the question.

"He was merely joking, the lad," he answered. "At first, I thought you comprehended, *non?* and would not be please' with heem, makin' fon at such a time as thees. Already I thought you know of thees Beauchampbeau, Father. He—he has a cabin, for sure. Eet ees half-way, mebbly, between here and Conahan's camp. Just nex' the reever eet stands—*oui*, you will see eet. But he does not open hees door to any man, nor has he for longer than I am remembering now. He had not spoken word to any man for all that time—but to heemself!"

"He stopped there and held the stirrup for me. When he straightened he tapped his forehead—so—with his finger.

"He—he ees not right, Father," he explained. "He ees gone—here! Once, thirty year ago, mebbly forty, he was—but thees—thees ees your way. You will watch closely the going, for eet ees steep in places, and sheer to the reever. And the reever—*voilà*, Father, she ees ronnin' white!"

"*M'sieur*, I started my horse forward, and that man went with me, a step or two.

"I thought you knew already of thees Beauchampbeau," he repeated. "I thought for sure you know. Eet ees a strange thing,

Father, and sad, too, mebbly, I'm thinking. Some day I will tell you the story myself—when you have much time to listen."

"His words were very earnest—almost hushed—but when I glanced back at him, he was not looking at me. *Non*, his face was turned away, and he was staring—gazing thoughtfully at a second placard that guarded this trail also—a card identical with the one I had seen when first I rode into Beckett at noonday. And he shook his head over it while I watched him.

"Strange!" he muttered. "Strange for sure! That there ees many thin' in thees woods I am not quite understand."

Father Le Fèvre's voice ran off into silence, and he sat and looked at me out of eyes that were almost blank with preoccupation.

Then, "*M'sieur*," he began again, "*m'sieur*, this tale would take long in the telling, were I to dwell on the rest of that day's ride. It needs only a few words to say that all afternoon I pressed steadily forward—*oui*, that is quickly enough covered. But I might sit here and talk for hours, and even then fail to make you understand the thoughts that went with me. Why—why, *m'sieur*, that day I did not understand them myself!"

"For they were odd, that innkeeper's words—and his actions, too—were they not? Why did he stare so gravely at the card that offered a reward for Antoine Le Beau, murderer, while he was speaking of Beauchampbeau, who was vacant, here behind his forehead—Beauchampbeau, who shared his roof with no man? It might have been just coincidence, *non?* Just absent-mindedness? But that afternoon my own brain would have none of such an explanation.

"And again, as through the night, there rode at my elbow a strange foreboding—a reasonless expectancy mixed with dread, which, once more, I blamed upon the river that hummed far below me, sleek and black and sinisterly flecked with white. The horse took his own gait as soon as we had sighted that south branch, and he stuck to it stubbornly.

"In that fashion, I pressed on into the dusk, my hands as free as was my brain of responsibility. I had forgotten Conahan and his need of me entirely. But I was watching ahead—I don't know why, but I was—when we rounded a sharp corner in

the trail and saw there before me, the cabin of Beauchampbeau! Against a black background of tamarack swamp it stood, with the river behind it and a bit of a clearing in front—just a two-room hut of squared logs chinked with white clay. Nothing startling; no, nothing unusual, even. And yet my horse danced and champed the bit, so harsh were my hands tied upon the reins.

"*M'sieur*, he was in the doorway, this Beauchampbeau who, so the proprietor at Beckett had said, was not quite right—here. He was standing there motionless, which was not strange, either—only—only, *m'sieur*, he—he was—waiting—for me!

"One hand was at his brow—so—to protect him from the sun; one hand clasped the door-frame beside him, and his whole gaunt body was leaning out toward me, expectant, as I rounded that curve in the trail. And then—and then, as I came into sight, he nodded to himself—nodded as if in complete satisfaction and relief.

"Do you wonder that it checked me—brought me up short? It—it made my hair crawl a little on the back of my neck. And, while I sat motionless, he stepped outside and bared his head to me. My horse pricked up his ears and went forward, to the very door. He was hungry—the horse.

"*M'sieur*, he had been a big man once, that Beauchampbeau. Even now the breadth of his shoulders was worth a second glance. And he was straight still—straight as any sapling, for all the terrible thinness of his face. Broad of forehead, he was, steady mouthed, but his eyes were too brilliant, too uncannily glittering—and they were never still. Under the long white hair that straggled down his cheeks, they shone like bits of polished metal—restless, flitting from object to object, as if he were endlessly searching for something. From them alone, one knew that the proprietor at Beckett had spoken the truth.

"No, he did not speak to me—not yet! But he gestured with one hand his invitation for me to enter, he who had shared his roof with no one for forty years! I dismounted—I did not want to—and he followed me inside.

"It was clean—that candle-lit room—spotless from ceiling to floor, and filled with the odor of cooking things that bubbled in kettles on the stove. He placed a chair for me, and I sat and waited—waited until he finished preparing that meal and put it on

the table. *M'sieur—m'sieur*, do you know, that table was set for two!

"And we ate, I and that man with the forehead of a thinker and the eyes of a madman. We ate in utter silence. He did not offer to speak, and I, *m'sieur*, I could not.

"He cleared the table and washed the dishes. Methodically he did it all, mindlessly, for whatever mind there was left beneath that long hair of his was upon other things. And when things were spotless again, he drew a chair up beside mine before the fire in the stove.

"A strange situation, *n'est-ce pas?* Seconds lengthened into minutes, and minutes mounted to hours that seemed interminable, and neither of us moved so much as a finger. More than once I had to shut my teeth to endure that strain. And yet I did not speak.

"How long I waited I do not know. It was longer than I liked, although I've never had any real mental record of it since. But I watched him. *M'sieur*, he was listening for something, and I began to listen, too. I heard no sound that night, except the night-noises of the woods, but there came a moment, at last, when he shot forward suddenly in his chair and then sat with his ear tilted craftily toward the north. He was nodding again, satisfied, when he relaxed finally and turned toward me.

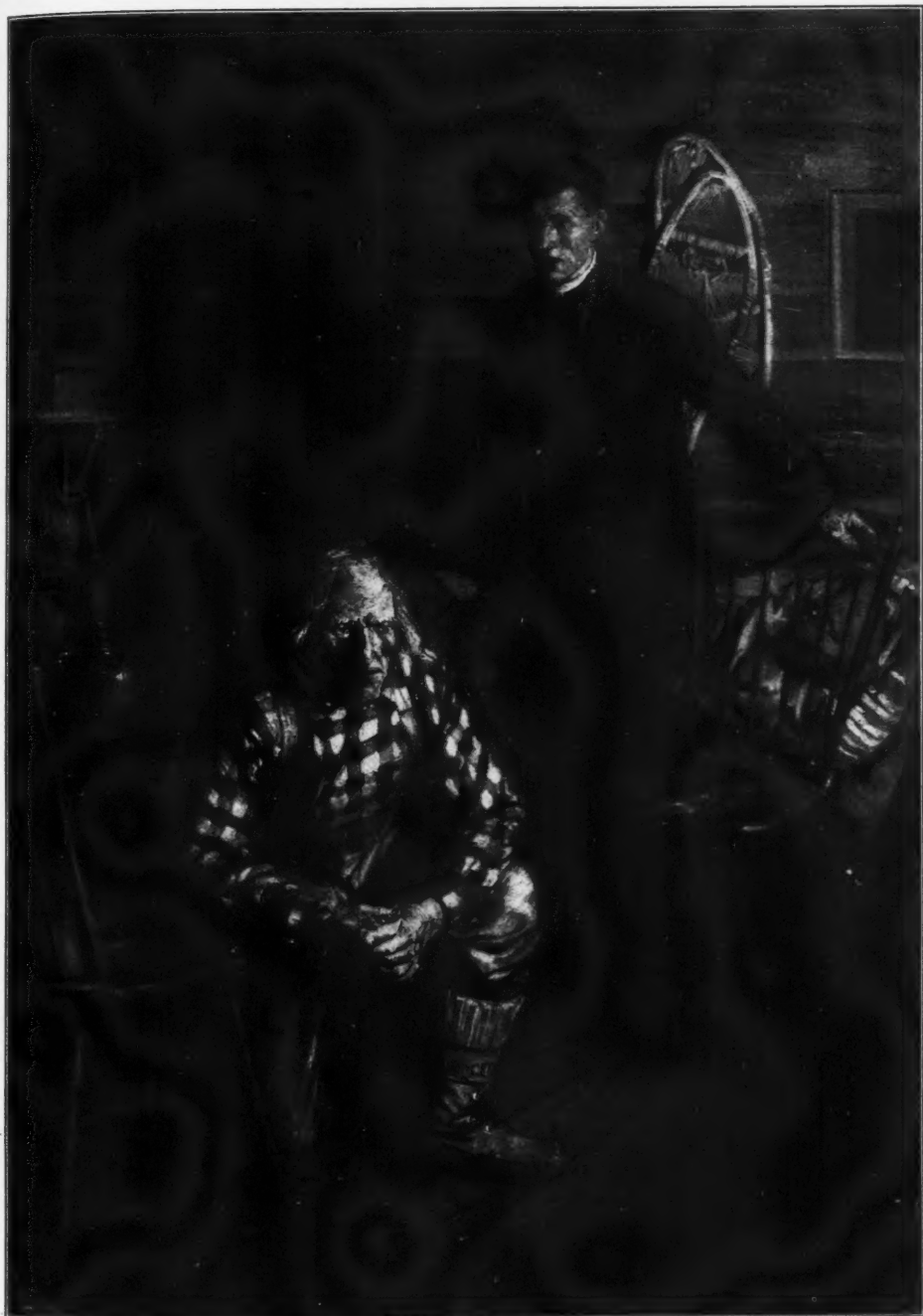
"*M'sieur*, no sane man's voice was ever saner in tone than was his that night. But his eyes were bad, *m'sieur*. He—he spoke to me, then, that madman.

"'Father,' he said, 'Father, it is not murder to kill a man who is a murderer himself!'

"I've told you that I had ridden all day blanketed with a dread that I could not shake off. Then you will know a little, *non?* the shock there was in those words, that night. I—I—*m'sieur*, I thought of Antoine Le Beau—Antoine Le Beau, murderer—little, and dapper, and womanishly handsome.

"He was waiting, that old man with the too bright eyes, and, little by little, I realized that there had been an interrogation in his voice. He was leaning toward me, too, expectant. I—I answered him. I had to, and I answered as sincerely as I knew how out of the knowledge that had been taught to me and which I, in turn, had come to the wilderness to teach.

"'There is a law,' I told him, 'a law that punishes those who transgress.'



DRAWN BY ANTON OTTO FISCHER

"'You will say mass for me, Father,' he finished. 'And pray, too, for mercy on *his* soul. He has long outwitted the law of man; now, to-morrow, he goes to face his God!'"

"He—he smiled at me. *Oui*, he smiled in just such a fashion as I have seen Conahan smile at my helpless lack of woodcraft.

"There is no law—of man," he stated slowly, 'upon the frontier, save each man's law unto himself.'

"Sane enough words, *non?* *M'sieur*, I do not know what prompted me to say it. I—I did not stop to think.

"Then there is the law of God.'

"He smiled again. He had been waiting for those words.

"The law of God,' he echoed my words. 'The law of God? Yes, there is that, always, when men have tried and failed. Have I not known it? Have I not waited? Has my faith been anything but strong?'

"His voice rose and rose—and then broke, shredded with age. *M'sieur*, he was trembling as he raised himself, but there was something that I found only terrible in his deliberation. He knelt beside his chair.

"You will say mass for me, Father,' he finished. 'And pray, too, for mercy on *his* soul. He has long outwitted the law of man; now, to-morrow, he goes to face his God!'

"*M'sieur*, the man was mad! You know that, don't you? I know it! His brain had died a living death, there in his body. But his spirit, *m'sieur*—what of his spirit? Oh, I cannot say! I knelt with him—that is saying enough—and I prayed with him—for him, and for the other. *Oui*, you have anticipated me—you know, too, that I prayed for mercy upon the soul of—of Antoine Le Beau.

"As when we rose together from our knees, it became silent again in that spotless little room. He—he never opened his lips after that. Without a sound he made the blankets ready for me upon the bunk.

"I went to bed. Maybe it was just the reaction of overtaxed nerves; maybe my brain would bear no more harrying—and—and it might have been something else. But I rested, *m'sieur*. I lay with each aching muscle relaxed, and I fell asleep. Last of all, I was conscious of him, bowed of head, muttering to himself before the stove.

"Just once, hours before morning, I waked. It may have been the moonlight streaming in at the door that disturbed me—it does not matter. But I opened my eyes to find him standing there in the open doorway, huge and shrunken, too, and gaunt to emaciation. There was a cap of fur upon his white hair—worn buckskin

garments clothed him from chin to sole. Over his shoulder slanted a flint-lock as old as himself—a knife across his hip. *M'sieur*, he looked like the ghost of those pioneers who carved this forest empire! •

"He stood there in that pale light, gazing back. He was talking; I caught a word or two as they came, whisper-soft, from his lips. But I did not understand at that instant. It was only after he had gone, straight out across the rotting snow into the blackness of the north, that I realized that he had been saying good-by to some one.

"*Adieu, ma petite!*' he had whispered."

Again the voice of that little, white-haired priest of Singing River drifted off into silence. Minute after minute I waited, while he sat and pondered, shaking his head a little to himself. He had forgotten my very presence, I think. With the thickening twilight, a chill breath had begun to creep down from the ridges. I had not moved before—now I shifted my cramped body ever so little, and Father Le Fèvre turned quickly back to me.

"*Oui, m'sieur*, I have not forgotten you," he said, in an oddly small voice. "I—I merely stopped to think a moment; that was all. Now I will proceed with the story.

"I slept till noon that next day. I should be ashamed to confess it, with Conahan waiting, but it is so. And I must have been worn out, both in body and brain, for the sun was overhead when I closed the door of that cabin behind me and came away.

"*M'sieur*, I did not let myself look back, even once, at the single set of moccasin-tracks that led away over the soft snow from the threshold. I kept my eyes to the front. And while I rode the river trail that afternoon, I tried to forget, too, my conversation of the night before with that old man whose eyes were too dangerously brilliant; I tried not to think of Antoine Le Beau.

"Conahan met me at dusk when I rode into camp. I was glad to see him, too, for his big body seemed very, very substantial, somehow. His face was anxious, also, but in spite of his own anxiety, I think he read, the very moment he laid eyes upon my face, that all was not right with me.

"He urged me to rest and eat before I talked to the men, but I would not. Together we went directly to the door of the big bunk-house. I had not realized till then how fatigued I was. The strained faces of

those men in that smoke-filled room danced like giddy white motes before me as I crossed the threshold, and I felt Conahan's hand steadying me at my elbow.

"I talked to them—I laughed at them. And when I came away they were laughing, too, like big children—all but those who were not swearing to themselves in thankfulness. Ah, they were strange men—my children of the river! Afterward I followed Conahan across the open toward his own bit of a shack. My feet were not too steady, and he kept close by my side. And then—and then, just as we were at the very door, my eyes were caught by something that glistened in the darkness, white against a near-by tree, and I stopped short in my tracks. *M'sieur*, it was that same placard—the reward in the name of the law! He—he had traveled fast, he who had tacked it there?

"Conahan heard the noise that came from my throat; he stepped forward quickly. This time, his heavy grasp upon my arm was not to be denied. And after he had closed the cabin door behind us, he stood and gazed at me, there in that brighter light, a question in his eyes. My face must have been very white and strained, for there was more than bewilderment in that gaze of his. He fell to talking gruffly, while he punched up the fire, but it was minutes before I realized that he was grumbling with me because I had neither eaten nor rested on the way.

"'Twas foolish, an' wor-rse,' he growled, 'to have pushed on through the night. And 'twas not safe, either—for ther-re are few men but what know better than to ride that river tr-trail after sundown.'

"He was worried—was Conahan.

"'But I have slept and I have supped,' I told him quietly, and—and, *m'sieur*, I think he understood what I meant.

"He whirled and dropped the chunk of wood with which he had been prodding the fire, and his eyes ran over me from head to foot. My clothes bore no signs of a night in an open camp. He just stood and stared.

"And then it all came tumbling from my lips—not as coherently as I have told it to you to-day, but in a broken, disjointed stream. I sat and told that big riverman of the reasonless dread and foreboding that had companioned me while I rode the night through to Beckett; I told him how the sight of that first placard on the tree had

startled me, how the innkeeper's incomprehensible gravity had somehow seemed to link Antoine Le Beau with that white-haired old madman and his lonesome cabin before the tamaracks.

"I wanted him to say it was only the result of overwrought nerves and an imagination sick from too much introspection, and I knew that he would not—knew that from his face alone. Why, I was just talking wildly, trying to reassure myself, but always, time after time, I came back to that moment when I rounded the curve in the trail to see Beauchampbeau in his open door—standing and gazing out at me.

"'He was waiting for me,' I repeated. 'He asked me to pray for him—bade me pray for another who—who goes to-day to his judgment. And he said good-by to some one else in that room—some one else whom I could not see. He knew I was coming. But how—how did he know?'

"*M'sieur*, Conahan's face grew grave and still graver while he listened. I saw his jaws set tighter—saw his lips tighten a little when I mentioned Le Beau and Beauchampbeau in the same breathless sentence. And I knew he was thinking the same thoughts that had made grave the face of that innkeeper at Beckett. But when he opened his mouth to speak, his voice was only non-committal. 'I have known of many things, here in the timber,' he said, 'which ar-re not too easy to understand.'

"I—I think I must have been very near the breaking-point. From Conahan's eyes alone, I should have read that I had stirred him far more deeply than his answer indicated. But before now I have told you how that silent man's reticence had often piqued me—almost hurt me, sometimes. I was more than displeased with his answer.

"'Why have you never told me of this man,' I demanded, 'this Beauchampbeau who has spoken to no man for forty years? Was it not my right to know—was it not something of which I should have been informed, months ago, when I first came to Singing River?'

"*M'sieur*, Conahan just stood and watched me—watched my hands, which were none too steady, for all that they were tightly clenched upon the chair-arms. But his answer came readily enough.

"'Faith, Father,' he began, 'an' I'm long afther thinkin' that you knew all ther-re was to know of this Beauchampbeau. For

When the River Ran White

ther-re was no reason for my not speaking, save that this thing which seems odd to you has long lost its str-rangeness to us of the river, from long familiarity. Nor-r is it a long story—and I am telling it to you now.

“Back forty years or so, it begins, when this same Beauchampbeau came nor-rth with his new bride and built that cabin which you saw yonder against the tamar-racks. You noticed his great shoulders, Father, and his str-rong man’s face? ’Tis said ther-re was no man in the nor-rth coun-threy then who could measure his length upon the ground, and it is not har-rd to believe, even now. And she—she was fit mate for him, as he was then, for all that she was little more than half as big. The spirit av her, Father! You’ve already hear-rd from his own lips the name he had for her. He called her “The Littlest One,” then, too.

“Such a pair they wer-re, when they came nor-rth to the river and built that cabin. That was like him, too, I’m thinkin’, for-r, av them all, his cabin was the farthest out on the frontier. And yet she was not afraid av the loneliness—that bit av a gir-rl—she had no need to be, for his eyes wer-re not as they ar-re now.

“Maybe man and woman before them had been as happy, Father, as they were those first few months—that is afther bein’ possible. But no man or woman could ever have been happier.

“No matther where he went, cutting logs or hauling or burning brush in his clearing, she was never more than arm’s length from him. She tr-rotted along at his side, from sunup till dusk, hurryin’ always to keep pace with the long, hurried str-ride av him, except when she had to leave him to cook the food for them both. Her small fingers wer-re swift, and ther-re is not so much labor in such a task, where one cares as she must have cared.

“Father, she was woman to that man—and gir-rl—and, at times, when he had laid aside his ax at the end av the day and swung her up in his ar-rms, he carried her back to the open door, just a small, tired child. They were mates—aye, you understand! And that will help you, Father, to understand the rest av it.

“Fall came, with the first snow, and found them with a warm roof and warmer hearts. ’Twas about then that he commenced talking of a tr-rip in to the fur-post, to br-ring out his own traps and the last

av their winter supplies. She wanted to go with him; she—she begged him to let her travel along, and he just held her a little closer while he laughed and told her that the tr-rail was too rough for small feet.

“He went, Father, and bade her watch shar-rp against his return when the sun had risen and set again. He promised to br-ring her things which men hunger to buy for the women they love. But she—the laughter was gone fr-rom her eyes while she watched him leaving. She—she told him she was afraid, Father, afraid av something—and she did not know just what. And—and when he came back, two days later, from a distance he saw that the door hung open upon its hinges—saw that no smoke rose from the chimney. It is not a pretty stor-ry—the rest av it, Father.

“He found marks outside in the snow when he ran madly up to the thr-reshold—found marks av a still mor-re bitter struggle within that small room. And she was gone, that gir-rl who had not wanted to stay alone! Nor-r were they hard to read—those signs. Two days and two nights he followed the tr-racks av a dog-sledge that ran nor-rth from the cabin door, and the morning of the thir-rd day he smelled the smoke av an open camp. He was a frontier’s man, Father, this Beauchampbeau; he knew betther than to go blundering in along that open tr-rail, and he was swinging around to come at that camp from the front, when a rifle cracked, out across the timber.

“And he—Beauchampbeau—was too late, that morning. For that other man—he who dr-rove that dog-sledge—was a woodsman, too, for all that his hear-rt was black. He had been watching, back along his own track. Father, the fir-re was still burning when Beauchampbeau found it. And she—she lay beside it in the snow, ver-ry, ver-ry quiet—that bit av a gir-rl whose soft lips had laughed so easily.

“A knotted rope dangled fr-rom one wrist, for she had fought him like a wild thing. The wreck av things back in the cabin had told Beauchampbeau that. He had bound her ar-rms, but now one hand was fr-ree. Somehow she had cut it—frayed it against a sharp rock, belike. And she had fired that shot—fired it with the gun av him who had tied her—and she had missed! Ther-re was a knife between her slim shoulders. He had struck her down from behind—a woman!



DRAWN BY ANTON OTTO FISCHER

“So it was that he found her—Beauchampbeau, to whom she had been woman and girl—and—and all”

"So it was that he found her—Beauchampbeau, to whom she had been woman and girl—and—and all. He wr-rapped her up in his coat and brought her back in his arms—back home. For a week or mor-re he tr-railed that sledge, always gaining on it, and yet always a little behind. But he never overtook it. Maybe—maybe it was not meant that he should—then!

"Annyhow, a blizzard wiped out the tr-racks, and he gave it up. Since that day he has spoken no wor-rd to anny man, save to yourself, Father. Men say he grew old in a week. Faith, I do not know. But he brought her back—her who had never wanted to be mor-re than arm's length away fr-om him; he straightened up the wreckage in that small room, and placed the things as nearly as he could like she would have left them.

"He's been ther-re since, Father—sane enough to look at, all but the eyes ay him. They—they ar-re not right. Forty years back, that was. And yet—and yet, even now, each month when the moon is at the full, he takes that dog-sledge tr-rail that leads from his threshold.

"And he follows it, out into the nor-rth—that tr-rail, which no eyes save his can see!"

"*M'sieur*, that was Conahan's explanation. Very quietly he told it that night—more than simply. He—he was mindful, you see, of my none too steady hands upon the chair-arms, but even he could not conceal from me that there was more behind his forehead than he had voiced.

"I was ashamed to ask it again, ashamed of my insistence. And yet—and yet I had to ask.

"But why," I faltered once more, "why do you suppose he was waiting for me to come?"

"Conahan had remained standing while he talked; now he turned and drew up a chair. Very deliberately he fell to filling his pipe, tamping the damp tobacco into the bowl with a slow forefinger. He could have smiled at the childishness of my question—and yet his answer was very, very sober.

"Who can say, Father," he muttered. "Who can say, of us? Chance, maybe, and maybe something else. For-r who of us is sur-re that those whom we call mad don't, afther all, near things that we don't hear—see things we cannot see?"

"A strange enough answer, *non, m'sieur*?"

He struck a match. He sat and drew hard on his pipe, one side of his brown face aglow with the flicker of the flame. It was odd, too, the sensation of relief that had come to me, little by little, while he was talking. Why, it almost seemed as if some responsibility which had been bowing me down, had been transferred to his shoulders—and Conahan's shoulders were broad.

"And—and this Le Beau," I asked him, then. "This Le Beau, for whom they offer a reward. He—he—how did it happen—the murder? Or is that not yet known to the men who are hunting him down?"

"Conahan turned and met my eyes. He was an unusual man, that soft-spoken boss of Singing River. He knew when to talk, knew when it was best to keep silent.

"Father," he told me very quietly. "Father, he shot a man. Far up to the nor-rth, a week or so ago, he shot a man who came back to find him tampering with his home. It—it is a str-range coincidence—and mor-re than that. To-night you will sleep. To-morrow, Father, I'll tell you the rest, when you have rested, in the morning."

"A man will sleep if he be tired enough—sleep no matter how wakeful his brain may be. And I slept that night, because my lids were too heavy for my will, because the ache in my muscles was even greater than the pulse which throbbed behind my eyes.

"Conahan was still sitting where I left him, his lips pursed upon his pipe-stem, gaze drifting off into nothingness, when I fell asleep. *M'sieur*, I waked to find him bending above me—to feel his fingers tight upon my shoulder. And there was something in his face that swept the sleep from my brain—brought me bolt upright in the blankets. The door of the cabin was open. There were wet foot-tracks upon the floor, wet snow still clinging to Conahan's high boots. Without thinking, without reasoning it, I knew that he had been gone while I lay unconscious—and knew that he had come back for me.

"He did not speak—not so much as a single word. He just stood and bade me follow him, merely with the shake of his head.

"As quickly as I could, I rose and slipped into the garments I had laid off, earlier in the night. When I joined him outside, the east was already alight; it was, maybe, an hour since dawn.

"As silently as he had waked me, Cona-

han wheeled and led the way, and the path that he took, away from that quiet camp, had already been traveled that morning. They were Conahan's own tracks that we followed.

"We did not talk as we traveled. I had no breath for speech. It was afterward that Conahan told me how he had sat up the whole night through—sat up just—just waiting for something, *m'sieur*, he did not know just what. Later, he told me of the gunshot that had brought him leaping to his feet, an hour before sunup. That morning, I just followed him mechanically, automatically, as best I could, a little proud that he did not distance me. Maybe I tried to think—maybe my brain did race ahead of me. I do not know. I don't remember anything, now, save that it seemed only natural that we should both be plunging forward that morning with all haste, through the half-light.

"A mile we covered—maybe two—maybe more. And then we came to that other trail—that trail of a dog-sledge in the rotting snow. He was hurrying—he who was driving it—racing at top speed, for the dogs had been going at a gallop. And it was headed at right angles to the way we had come—headed back toward the river.

"*M'sieur*, we had not followed it a hundred paces before another set of tracks swung in from the north, to be mingled with those of the dogs and their driver. It was at that point that Conahan had turned back and come for me.

"I stopped there, stopped, and stood like a man of stone. *Oui*, I knew those moccasin-prints—I knew them well. Had not I reason—had not I seen them once before—leading off from Beauchampbeau's cabin into the morning?

"I knew then what we would find at that track's end; I knew as well as did my man Conahan. And there was something of relentless, absolute certainty in his swing as he strode steadily on ahead of me. You might ask it of me a hundred times and I could not explain it to you—that surety. *Voilà*, I have asked myself far more often since, and failed each time entirely.

"We went on and on, Conahan cat-footed for all his great weight, I blundering and stumbling and breathing through parted lips.

"We raised the murmur of the river ahead of us, swung south and south until

the roar of that current, hidden by the heavy timber ahead, became a living menace in our ears. And there, beside the trail, I found the musket—Beauchampbeau's old flint-lock—cast aside and half buried in the snow.

"Conahan had come up with the sledge when I overtook him. They were lying, tongues out, lolling in the snow—the dogs—glad of an opportunity to rest. And about them, rods to each side, the snow was broken and trampled—and—and spotted crimson with blood.

"He—he had fought hard, the driver of that dog-sledge. *Oui*, he had fought hard against that avalanche of destruction that had struck him from the rear. I—I often wonder if he screamed; I wonder sometimes if he just met it silently, as a man should, when he felt those fingers slide round under his chin—slip deep and deep into his throat. *M'sieur*, think—think what that madman's eyes must have been like—so bright—so near his face!

"But what chance did he have? What chance would you have, or I, or Conahan even, against him who had followed that trail for forty years? Why, *m'sieur*, Beauchampbeau had found *her* with a knife between her shoulders—her who had been woman and girl and all to him! And—and so it was we found Beauchampbeau!

"The river was very near now. Just a few steps ahead it roared at the bottom of a deep chasm that hid it. Again Conahan went ahead and then turned back and beckoned to me.

"I—I did not want to join him. I would have done anything else gladly. And yet I went on and stood, at last, at his side. Below us the river roared by, sleek and black and dangerous; it was humming to itself as you hear it now. *M'sieur*, it was running white. And they lay there on the rocks locked together at the very edge of that leaping torrent, both very quiet—very, very limp, *m'sieur*.

"Beauchampbeau's face was hidden, but the features of Le Beau were upturned. And they were ghastly—ghastly and distorted—the face of Antoine Le Beau, who had been little and dapper and womanishly handsome. I—I could not see it then, but later, when Conahan had brought them both up and placed them upon the dog-sledge, I saw that there was a smile upon Beauchampbeau's poor old lips—*m'sieur*,

When the River Ran White

a wonderful smile! For it was identical with that one which I had seen, none too plainly, two nights before, when he stood and said good-by to some one whom I could not see. He—he had gone out to her—smiling.

"Conahan placed them both upon the dog-sledge, and we brought them back that morning—back to the cabin we had left so hurriedly at daybreak. And from there we sent the sledge out to Beckett with two of Conahan's own men to drive it.

"As silently as we had begun it, we picked up that day's routine. What was there to say, *m'sieur*? What was there to think? Coincidence? *Oui*, it could have been that, perhaps. Only—only it seems an inadequate explanation, sometimes. It seemed inadequate in the face of the answer that Conahan made to my question when I broke the long quiet that morning.

"He was standing in the cabin door; he had filled his pipe and struck a match to fire it. And the wood of that match had burned down until the flame was scorching his fingers while he stood, lost in thought.

"Do you think it was only chance?" I asked him. "Conahan, do you believe it was merely chance that Beauchampbeau blundered last night upon that dog-sledge trail? He—he bade me pray for him—bade me pray for another who had mocked at the laws of men. Did he really know; could he have known, do you think? Does it—does it seem strange, a little, to you?"

"*M'sieur*, Conahan just shook his head

—shook it helplessly, like this. He took his pipe from between his lips.

"'Father,' he said, 'Father, who am I that I should say? Two days ago, when I sent for-r you, you were waiting for something—dr-reading something, and you didn't know just what. That was str-range and more than that. And he was waiting for you, a night back; he who was Beauchampbeau was standin' in his doorway, watching for you to come. That is not easy to explain, either. Chance, Father? Faith? How do I know; how can I say, when I'm tellin' you now that this Le Beau whom Beauchampbeau sent last night to his judgment was the son of the Le Beau whom he tr-railed forty years ago—and could not overtake?'"

A velvet wall of darkness had crept out from the big timber, thicker and thicker, until Father Le Fèvre's black-clad figure had become nothing but a formless blot topped by the gleaming circle of his white hair. I could not see his face, but from the very tilt of his head I knew that he was staring off into the blackness toward the river that sang beneath us. And he, too, shook his head a little while I watched; he spoke, but the words were not meant for me. He had forgotten again, for the moment, my very presence. It was to the river that he spoke—to the river and to himself.

"I wonder, now," he murmured softly. "I wonder."



"Conahan placed them both upon the dog-sledge, and we brought them back that morning"

From Newsboy to the Senate

By John Temple Graves

DURING the sweltering July of 1911, the American Senate engaged in a very picturesque and spirited debate over the motion of a senator from Mississippi to retain on the roll of Senate employees Jim Jones, an old Confederate negro who had been the body-guard of Jefferson Davis, had voluntarily gone to prison with the Confederate chieftain as his valet, and had been always loyal in war, loyal in peace, and stainless in character.

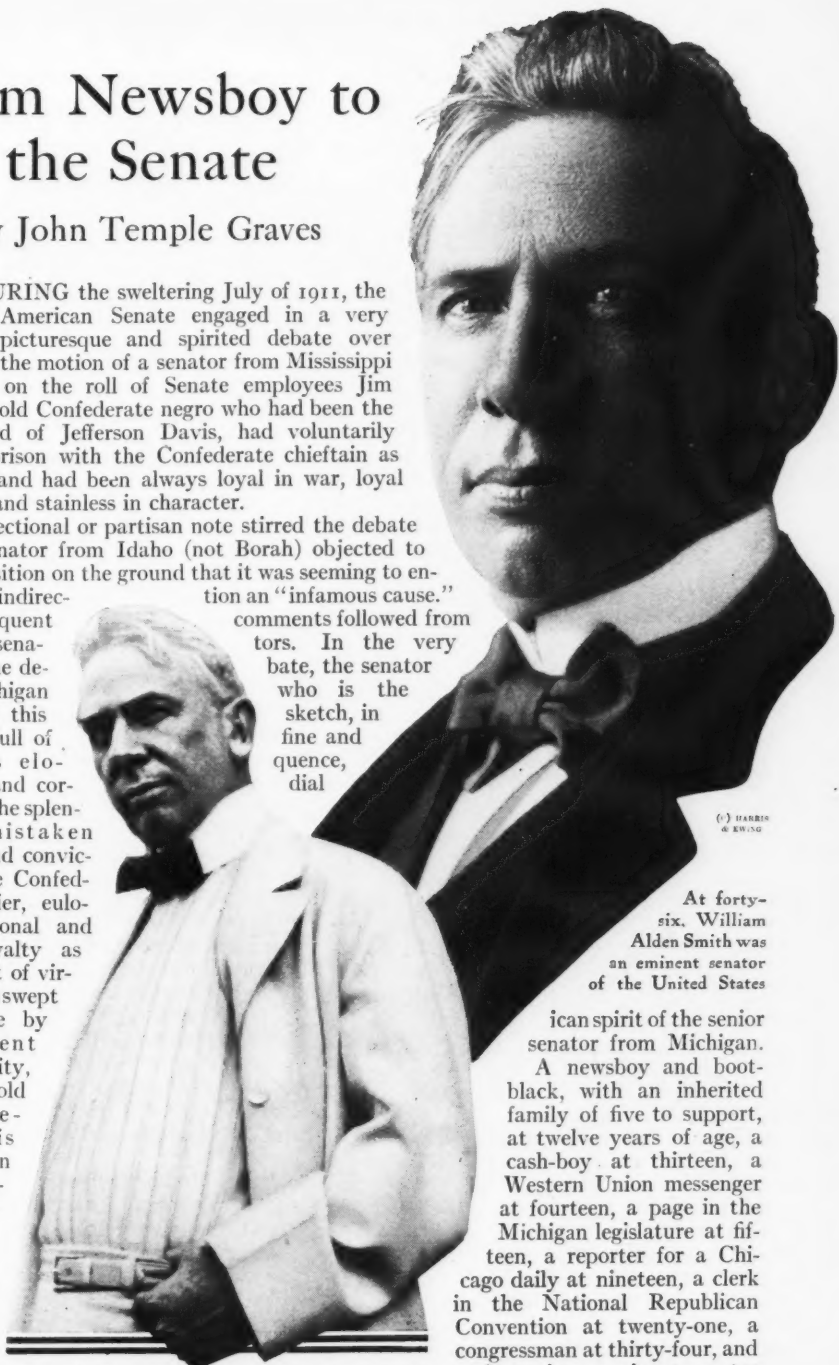
Not a sectional or partisan note stirred the debate until a senator from Idaho (not Borah) objected to the proposition on the ground that it was seeming to endorse by indirection an "infamous cause."

Very eloquent Southern senatorial crisis of the defunct Michigan subject of this a speech full of generous eloquence, paid full and contribute to the splendid if mistaken courage and conviction of the Confederate soldier, eulogized personal and public loyalty as the noblest of virtues, and so swept the Senate by his eloquent magnanimity, that the old negro retained his place by an overwhelming majority.

And this incident fitly illustrates the manly, generous, and Amer-

ican spirit of the senior senator from Michigan. A newsboy and boot-black, with an inherited family of five to support, at twelve years of age, a cash-boy at thirteen, a Western Union messenger at fourteen, a page in the Michigan legislature at fifteen, a reporter for a Chicago daily at nineteen, a clerk in the National Republican Convention at twenty-one, a congressman at thirty-four, and at forty-six an eminent senator of the United States!

He is for the American policies, and he makes his advocacy heard and felt



(C) HARRIS & EWING

At forty-six, William Alden Smith was an eminent senator of the United States

From Newsboy to the Senate

It would be difficult to find a career more wholesome and more thoroughly representative of this land of opportunity and of equality under republican institutions than that of William Alden Smith.

It is a long, high jump from the newsstand to the American Senate, and it takes strong legs and a clear head and a resolute will to make it.

William Alden Smith has all of these things, and the years have demonstrated that he has something much more. He has noble ambitions, a definite purpose, tireless industry, high courage, and a great human heart.

It is out of his heart that there came the things that make William Alden Smith unusual among men. The fine, noble spirit within the man gives him his cordial grace of manner, his swift sympathy with his fellow men, his generous partisanship, his magnanimous foemanship, and his catholic love of country.

He is personally known and personally loved by two-thirds of the entire population of Michigan. When he came to the Fifty-fourth Congress, he, a Republican, was elected from a Democratic district by a majority of ten thousand votes. When he ran for the last time in his district, he was elected unanimously without any votes against him anywhere. Good stuff in a man like that!

Of the blood of old Israel Putnam and the four Abercrombie brothers, minutemen of the Revolution, with a Southern mother and a Michigan father, the heredity was perfect for public usefulness, and the grandson of Henry Alden, the Virginian, mingles the qualities of his forbears to the credit of his constituents.

A LOYAL FRIEND

Deep in his loyal soul, William Alden Smith, of Michigan, has held the humanities and the obligations under which he fought and won. He has never forgotten the men who labored with him and the men who rose with him. And for the fellows who did not rise, William Alden Smith's heart is just as warm and his hand is just as ready.

Because he won in the battle of life by hard labor and unflinching honesty, Senator Smith has always been a hard worker and a senator of sterling integrity. His diplomacy is, and it has always been, the diplomacy of directness and sincerity. There is never

any doubt as to where he stands on any public question. He is absolutely fearless in the statement of his convictions, and neither party caucuses, nor Senate traditions, nor autocratic chief executives embarrass or intimidate the expression of his honest views.

And because this land of liberty and opportunity has prospered Senator Smith out of stern struggles into fortune and repute, he loves this country and he respects it everywhere. He is no cringing American, no truckling Tory, apologetic in commerce and apprehensive in war.

WHAT HE HAS DONE

He is for the American policies, is the senator from Michigan, and he makes his advocacy heard and felt. Upon the stalwart American issue of the exemption of American coastwise shipping from the Panama Canal tolls, he took his stand promptly and resolutely against the surrender of American rights to England. In the Foreign Affairs committee he fought vigorously against repeal, challenged all opposition, including the President's, with fearless frankness, and closed the debate for the American contention with one of the most masterly and convincing speeches of the entire session.

Senator Smith was the first Republican in the Senate with courage to attack the undisputed and almost omnipotent sway of his Republican colleague, Senator Aldrich, and to force from the Aldrich Emergency Currency Bill the railroad-bond feature of which he did not approve.

He voted unflinchingly against the seating of Reed Smoot as a senator from Utah. He fought with the forefront of the opposition to the seating of William Lorimer, with his fraudulent title from Illinois. He voted against the seating of Isaac Stephenson as senator from Wisconsin, with his unfiled and detached accounts of his campaign expenses.

Both in House and Senate, Senator Smith was a champion of the direct election of senators by the people, and to him more than to any other man his state of Michigan owes its excellent primary-election law.

Perhaps the most conspicuous recent service of the Michigan senator was in the investigation of the Titanic disaster, over which he was selected by his colleagues of the Committee on Commerce to preside.



Mrs. William
Alden Smith

The thoroughness and fidelity with which, without training in maritime and admiralty law, he discharged this great task were admirable evolutions of the same qualities which characterized his youth. He went straight to New York, went straight to the Carpathia, seeking personal interviews and information from the cabins of survivors and friends, went to the bottom of every question growing out of this greatest of all sea disasters, and presented a report which won the unstinted praise of English and American jurists and journalists, and will help in all time to increase the safeguards of passengers at sea.

The Michigan man is the second ranking Republican member of the Committee on Foreign Relations, and the second ranking member of the Committee on Commerce, and a member of the Committee on Naval Affairs, where he stands for a greater navy and the full strengthening of the first line of our defense.

He was one of the men appointed to draft the declaration of war against Spain. He visited Cuba during the cruel régime of Weyler, and his denunciations of the "butcher's" cruelties did much to stir the American arms to action. He was the friend of William McKinley, who used Smith's pen in signing the declaration of war.

Senator Smith is an orator of national fame and is in frequent demand upon national and literary occasions. He is happily married. Mrs. Smith enjoys an enviable place in social and official life at Washington, and bears her own and her husband's honors with grace and dignity. They have one son of twenty-one years, who carries his father's name with high promise of future success.



(C) AMER. PRESS ASS'N

It would be difficult to find a career more wholesome and more thoroughly representative of this land of opportunity and of equality than that of Senator Smith



DRAWN BY CHARLES E. CHAMBERS

Beneath him he saw the steamer that had loomed in their way. It was only a small steamer, after all
(*The New Adventures of Wallingford*)

THE NEW ADVENTURES OF

Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford

J. Rufus and Blackie, always on the lookout, are suddenly confronted by a somewhat appalling opportunity. It's too good to be missed, but— As you read, you will pity poor Big Jim, physical coward that he is. Yet he goes through with it like a hero and gets in his fine work at the psychological moment, with the usual result. It will be a long day before he will want to repeat this experience, but at the same time this adventure provides lots of fun for those who read the "Wallingford" stories—and who doesn't?

By George Randolph Chester

Author of "Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford," "The Cash Intrigue," etc.

Illustrated by Charles E. Chambers

"YAAAAAAAH!"

That composite howl of delight from the five thousand backwardly bent spectators on the beach at Long Bay, was music to the ears of Johnny Johnson, who, circling above the blue water and the board walk and the auto-blackened beach, had just fallen a sheer thousand feet and was now spiraling gracefully upward again.

"Johnny's a wonder when he's pickled!" proudly observed String Dinkus. Besides being the brother-in-law of the sensational aviator, he was so tall and thin that he made the near-standing Blackie Daw feel fat.

Clustered close to String were Toad Jessup and young Jimmy Wallingford, their heads tilted at right angles and their eyes widened to bright disks, as Johnny Johnson, far up in the air, dipped like a roller-coaster. Big J. Rufus Wallingford, resplendent in his vacation flannels, viewed the group with some satisfaction. The kids were fine mixers.

"Johnny!" suddenly shouted String, terror setting in his boyish face; and back of the shout rose a mighty shriek of horror from the beach and board walk. The aeroplane had suddenly started downward, tumbling over and over like a bird with a broken wing!

A motor-boat lay at the edge of the beach, staked to the sand. The first person to reach it was Blackie Daw, and the second was String Dinkus.

"Start 'er up!" yelled String, in a voice between a squeak and a rumble, as he dragged the chain into the bow. The tears were streaming down his long cheeks, but he pushed an excitable fat man away from the boat as Blackie started the engine.

They found little Johnny Johnson among the heap of floating wreckage, with so many broken bones that he was scarcely worth repairing. But String seemed to think a lot of him, damaged as he was, so they brought him ashore and sent him home; and the black-mustached hero of the hour, the same being Horace G. Daw, rushed up to the Long Bay Hotel for some dry clothes.

Blackie, occupying the big chair which had hitherto been held sacred to the avoirdupois of Jim Wallingford, was in the drowsy content of his third little steaming jug, when a bell-boy with lips like scorched buns brought up a card, and glued his eyes on Wallingford's ever-ready pocket. He presented the card to the invalid.

"Ogden Farrel, chairman Aviation Committee," read Blackie, and twirled his mustaches with an absurd assumption of importance. "Show him up, Ham." And as the boy left the room, "two bits" better off, Blackie turned to Wallingford with a grin. "You may remain."

"About one more hot toddy and you'll be ready to break your own air-ship," chuckled Wallingford, who was quite proud of Blackie's prompt rescue-work.

Ogden Farrel proved to be a short, dark man, with his plumpness neatly groomed,

The New Adventures of Wallingford

experience in his eyes, achievement in his stubby mustache, and authority in his voice.

"Just called to pay my respects, Mr. Daw," he remarked, in his most clublike tones. "I trust you will suffer no ill effects from your exposure."

"Only a pleasing thirst," grinned Blackie, with a glance at the little jug. "My friend Mr. Wallingford, Mr. Farrel. Will you have something?"

"Thanks, no," refused Farrel, shaking hands with Wallingford and accepting a proffered chair. "I'm afraid Johnson is out of the flying-game for good. Too bad!"

"We'll have to do something for him," commented Blackie, hastily continuing the conversation as he saw that Wallingford was studying Mr. Farrel with keen eyes.

"Oh, certainly!" agreed the visitor complacently. He liked to head subscription lists. "I presume you gentlemen are highly interested in the sport of aviation."

"Well, my friend Wallingford is," stated Blackie, with a sidelong glance at his partner. "He's an enthusiast. One of his greatest delights is flying."

"Indeed!" And Mr. Farrel turned for a more critical inspection of the huge and jovial Wallingford. The clothes of J. Rufus had been fitted to him by the inch, and if there was a later cravat than the one he wore, the steamer had not yet landed with it. "You don't happen to know Sir John Burlton, do you?"

Wallingford only hesitated for a moment, but he ended by acknowledging that he had not that pleasure.

"Oh, you should know Burly!" Mr. Farrel displayed distinctly that the gentlemen had dropped a notch in his esteem by not knowing Sir John. "He is the most ardent of all the air sportsmen; weighs nearly as much as you, I should think, Mr. Wallingford—about seventeen stone."

"It's a great pleasure," commented Wallingford, with a reproving glance at Blackie. "Do you fly?"

"I haven't as much time as I should like for these things." And Farrel's close-cropped mustache set with the squareness of a deliberately busy man. "I've built up my establishment through rather severe plugging, but I encourage the sports—yachting, polo, and all the rest. My yachts are usually close to the cups, and a great many of my ponies have been on the winning teams."

The eyes of Wallingford had a sparkle in them. He understood Ogden Farrel to the last toadying inch of him.

"Oh, yes," he said, at a venture; "didn't I see your cups somewhere on display recently?"

That good guess was sufficient to open the flood-gates. Mr. Ogden Farrel, given this splendid opportunity to speak of himself and his exploits, his business and his friends, revealed his past, present, and future until nearly dinner-time.

When he had gone, Blackie Daw's eyelids were swollen nearly shut, and Wallingford chuckled for a solid three minutes.

"Don't it beat Texas how we can never have a little quiet vacation?" he finally complained. "There's no chance to forget business when a hick like that forces his way into your room and gives you a diagram of his solar plexus."

"I hope you don't figure that tightwad for a simp," objected Blackie. "He talks too much to be useful."

"He's a New York hick, and that's the prize variety," decisively considered Wallingford. "He's meat."

"I'll bet you a door-knob we don't land him."

"I'll take the bet, and give you a keyhole for odds," chuckled Wallingford. "All we have to do is get a list of this wimp's property and pick out our share."

The door burst open, and the two boys came racing in, glistening with excitement.

"Aw, say!" shouted Toad Jessup, every freckle on him a yellow incandescence. "Something's got to be done about Johnny Johnson!"

"They haven't a dollar!" added young Jimmy, speaking in the awed voice of a boy who has come close to his first tragedy.

"We're going to raise a purse for them," said Blackie, who had straightened up the moment the boys came into the room. As a rule, he had more interest in their affairs than he had in his own.

"I knew you'd do something." Toad twisted Blackie's mustache.

"That won't be enough," speculated Jimmy. "Mr. Johnson has been putting all his money into two big air-ships. He was going to run them between New York and Chicago."

"Aw, they're stunners!" broke in Toad. "Twelve-passengers; but one of 'em hasn't got its engine yet, and the other isn't quite



They found little Johnny Johnson among the heap of floating wreckage, with so many broken bones that he was scarcely worth repairing

finished. Say, they're worth forty thousand dollars! Daddy Blackie, let's buy 'em!"

Wallingford laughed, and, rising, looked at his watch; then he went into his dressing-room. Ten minutes later, he came out, razor in hand. He had proceeded no further in his dressing than to lather his face.

"I say, Blackie," he called. "Would you go up in an air-ship, if we had one?"

II

"I DON'T want to stand in anybody's light," remarked the manager of Johnny Johnson, sitting on the trunk. He was a thick person, with a low forehead and a pompadour like a hedge.

The bundle of bandages which represented little Johnny Johnson mumbled something and kicked with one toe. A thin-faced woman at the head of the bed, whose expression would have been sour except for her eyes, bent over to catch the mumble.

"Johnny says you're a good scout, Plug; but he wants to sell the machines," she interpreted. "That's what I say."

Big Jim Wallingford, sitting in the window-sill of the aviator's rented cottage, smiled jovially on the assemblage.

"We don't propose to buy the machines outright," he explained, for the fourth time. "Mr. Daw and myself"—and he nodded across at Blackie, who swung a long leg from a corner of the painted dresser—"propose to incorporate a company, giving you stock for your machines, and——"

"Well, I don't want to stand in anybody's light," remarked Plug Adkins, brushing his hedge with a broad palm. "But if it ain't a spot-cash deal, I say nix. You keep those two big planes, Mrs. Johnson, and let me make you some money with them. String, here's a good chauffeur."

String stood up from against the wall. He was tall enough to weigh two hundred, but he tipped the scales at ninety-eight, and when he stood alongside a lamp-post it was confusing. Just now there was a lump which moved up and down in his neck, as he twisted his cap and looked at his beloved teacher.

"Nothing doing," he objected. "I ain't

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got the nerve. I can do steady, straight driving, but no fancy stunts like Johnny."

"You never had an accident," contended Plug, wiping an eyebrow with a forefinger which was like a thumb.

"Of course I didn't," immediately acknowledged String, drawing up one leg like a stork. "I don't suppose I ever will have an accident. I ain't got the nerve."

"There's no use in talking," declared Mrs. Johnson. "Johnny's said he'd sell those machines, and they have to be sold. I never want to see another flight." And, as she turned her hard face down toward Johnny, there was a wonderful sweetness in her eyes.

"All right, then." Plug slid from the trunk on two feet which looked like handbags. "I won't stand in anybody's light, but I want to say this: The proposition's got to give Johnny the best of it. Shoot, Mr. Wallingford!"

Mr. Wallingford prepared to shoot. He beamed on all of them in turn, beginning with Mrs. Johnson and ending with String. He was a fine, cordial-looking man, with his big, round, pink face and his jovial smile; and in his very clothing there was a prosperity which invited confidence.

"Well, you value your machines at forty thousand dollars, don't you?"

"Spot cash," replied Plug, and Johnny's eyes batted.

"We'll organize a two-hundred-thousand-dollar company," went on Wallingford. "I'll give Johnny sixty thousand dollars' worth of stock for his machines. Inside a month, I'll guarantee to sell Mr. Johnson's stock at par, and hand him the cash—sixty thousand dollars; if I don't, we'll dissolve the company and I'll hand back the machines."

"Who gets the rest of the stock?" Plug's voice was husky with haste as he asked that question. Wallingford smiled blandly.

"Fifty thousand will be set aside for investors. Mr. Daw and I intend to take up seventy-five thousand, which leaves five thousand for each of the remaining incorporators—Mrs. Johnson, String, and yourself."

"That settles it!" immediately declared Plug. "If you hadn't offered me any, I might study it over; but I ain't for sale. I'm for Johnny!"

Wallingford found himself at a loss. He had built his success, in his peculiar line of business, by dealing with people of more

greed; but now he found the eyes of Johnny and Mrs. Johnson and String and Plug all fixed on him coldly.

"The proposition's all right, Plug." Blackie slipped down from the painted dresser and leaned in friendliness on the bedpost. "Johnny would be tickled if he could sell his machines for forty thousand, and if we can get him sixty, he don't care who else makes a stake out of it; do you, Johnny?"

Johnny moved his big toe and mumbled out of one corner of his mouth.

"He says certainly not," translated Mrs. Johnson, "and that's what I say; that is, if he gets the sixty."

"That's it!" Plug resumed his seat on the trunk and laughed. "How do we know Johnny gets the sixty?"

Wallingford was on the point of chuckling at the pained expression on Blackie Daw's face. It hurt Blackie to have his word doubted. This, however, was no time for merriment, so J. Rufus explained the whole thing so minutely that any child could understand it. He told them exactly how the company was to be formed, and what safety lay in it for them, and he offered to put up a ten-thousand-dollar forfeit, showed them the money, whipped ten one-thousand-dollar bills from his big red pocketbook with the flourish which had never before failed of its effect. Never had he talked so smoothly, so convincingly; but at the end, Johnny's business manager raked his hedge.

"I don't want to stand in anybody's light," he observed; "but this proposition looks on the blink to me, because I don't understand it. Do any of you?"

Mrs. Johnson did not; Johnny did not; String did not; nor did any of them seem inclined merely to trust the word of the two earnest promoters.

"Then it's off!" announced the thick spokesman. "You leave it to me, Johnny, and I'll get you the best price I can."

Wallingford and Blackie looked at each other blankly. They were not at all accustomed to fail at inspiring confidence. Blackie suddenly grinned, and, going to the door, called out to the waiting machine,

"Kids, you may come in to see Johnny."

Wallingford suppressed a chuckle as he grasped Blackie's trick; then he turned suddenly grave, but he did not stop the boys.

They bulged in like a pair of calves, and tiptoed with such elaborate noise that they might much better have stamped.

"Hello, Johnny!" they yelled, as they came in, and then, remembering the patient, they lowered their voices to mere peeping husks. "Hello, Johnny!" And they bent over the bed, with sobered faces.

Johnny grinned at them with his eyes, and moved his toe for their benefit, and the Adam's apple of String went up and down in his throat like a ball in a fountain. They were very earnest and sincere, those two boys, and Mrs. Johnson got them each a piece of cake. While they ate it, Toad leaned against the trunk by the side of Plug, and Jimmy stood against the wall by the side of String.

Johnny mumbled something. Mrs. Johnson bent over to catch the words; then she motioned for Plug, and they whispered together at the head of the bed, Johnny occasionally mumbling.

"Say; tell us that again," finally invited Plug, drawing both boys to him as he sat on the trunk.



The president of the Manhattan & Lake Michigan read half-way down the first typewritten page

III

CRISP as a cracker was Ogden Farrel, as he sat in the white-enameled offices of the Ogden Farrel Refrigerator Line. On the edge of his desk were twelve buttons, and every time he pressed one of them, somebody came in and took orders. Around the room were filing-cases, which were strictly business; but on top of the cases were silver cups—trophies of sport. On the walls were pictures of refrigerator-cars, yachts, and polo ponies. There was a carnation in the man's buttonhole, and in his hand was a card:

THE NEW YORK & CHICAGO AIR-PLANE
LIMITED

J. RUFUS WALLINGFORD

Farrel smiled, as he waited for the representative of the New York & Chicago Air-plane Limited. He remembered Wallingford perfectly, but J. Rufus was not in trim white flannels this trip. He wore an afternoon cutaway of immaculate tailoring, and his puff tie was a marvel of manual dexterity. Ogden Farrel paid that dexterity instant respect as he rose and shook hands.

"Pleased to meet you again," he observed. "This is a novel idea," and he referred to the card. "I hope it isn't a joke."

"There's no humor in straight business," chuckled Wallingford. "You remember the pickled aviator, little Johnny Johnson. This company was originally a scheme to sell his two big aeroplanes—twelve-passenger machines—for carrying amateur death-defiers on long thrills."

"Oh, I see!" Farrel donned his complacently benevolent expression. "A polite way of putting a benefit subscription."

"Not a benefit," corrected Wallingford, with the jovial smile which rounded his pink face and half closed his eyes. "It's the grandest commer-

cial sporting-proposition ever sprung. The machines, one of them shy an engine, will go the distance. We can get five hundred dollars apiece for twelve passengers, for the first trip from each end. After that we can get two hundred dollars a seat, twice a week. We're incorporated for two hundred thousand."

"A startling idea," commented Farrel, "but I should hardly class it as sport."

Wallingford sat up.

"The sport of aviation will never reach its highest development until commerce has incited the ingenuity of inventors. Therefore, the man who encourages the commercial development of flying will be of the greatest aid to the sport." He raised a finger and leaned forward. "I quote verbatim, from a speech made last week in the House of Lords by Sir John Burlton."

"No!" exclaimed Farrel, an instant change of expression on his face. He was no longer merely interested. He was awed and respectful. "Did Burly say that?"

A sure shot! Wallingford rubbed his knees.

"Burly's a great sport," Farrel resumed, and, for twenty minutes, he told entertaining tales of his friend, Sir John Burlton. "How many shares have you placed?" he abruptly concluded.

"All but fifty thousand dollars' worth," said Wallingford, with an appearance of easy nonchalance. "We're only gunning for red-blooded sportsmen with real money, and I'm not going to ask you to pike on this. I want you to take it all—or none." Wallingford was watching him narrowly. "Tell you what we'll do: Suppose you get up a party of your most reckless friends, and come down to my place on the bay, Saturday afternoon, for a trial-spin, and make it a week-end party."

Farrel rose. He was beaming with anticipated pleasure. "I wouldn't miss it," he heartily accepted. "I'll bring you some notable guests, I think."

Wallingford kept his chuckle for outside. What he wanted was notable guests.

IV

IN the dusk, the big aeroplane sat on the waters of the bay like a monster sea-bird, and Wallingford, shooting out to it in the tender with the rest of the happy crowd,

became possessed of a sudden desire to go home. Blackie Daw, however, kept a keen eye on him, and there was a half-malicious grin under those black mustaches.

The thickest rod moved as they approached the immense contrivance. It was String, and he opened a gate in the railing for them.

"Now, you fat slob, swallow your heart and speak up like a little man!" came a whisper over Wallingford's shoulder.

"Can that stuff!" growled Wallingford, and then put on his cordiality. "Step right in, gentlemen. I think Mr. Truller and I had better sit in the center."

Truller was the heavy man of the party, and they all laughed. Wallingford was glad to get that laugh. It seemed to make the undertaking more human. Stepping aboard, he welcomed each member of Farrel's party with a fair imitation of his usual suavity. They were men constantly in the public eye, because of their wealth and social position and spectacular performances, and to know any one of them was either an honor or disgrace, according to the way one looked at it.

"The very bigness of the thing gives one confidence," said young Alfred Hoosiland, who was the most daring small-craft sailor in the rich set. He owned a monoplane.

"Doesn't it!" heartily agreed Farrel, and Wallingford, uncomfortable as he felt, tipped a wink to Blackie in the dim light, as he recognized Farrel's eagerness to answer young Hoosiland's voice. J. Rufus had already discovered, from the conversation, that this was the first time the Refrigerator Line king had entertained more than half the party. Quick to seize an opportunity was Farrel. It would take a man thoroughly conversant with human weaknesses to engage that gentleman.

Down in the bay a big steamer blew her whistle. A light breeze pressed gently under the wide-spreading wings, so that the huge craft lifted as if anxious to be away. The businesslike String, obstructing a thin, vertical slice of the dusk, looked down the length of the deck, gave his cap another twist, and screwed it on his head. The water lapped impatiently in the channels between the three keels.

"All ready, String?" asked Plug. He stood in the little doorway of the after cabin.

"Yes, sir. Say, Mr. Daw; tell 'em about

movin' around. If it was Johnny, he'd let 'em tango; but I ain't got the nerve."

"Oh, yes, boys," laughed Blackie. "You heard the orders? Anything else, String?"

"No, sir." String walked forward to the glass-enclosed mass of levers and wheels and strange instruments. Before he sat down, he slipped himself into a heavy coat, and it was as if he were suddenly inflated. "All right, everybody?" he called.

Everybody, except one, was all right. J. Rufus Wallingford, he of the impressive chest and the jovial face, had a pea-green feeling around the eyes; but he put all his breath into his voice.

"All right, String!"

"All right, sir."

There was the familiar sound of a self-starter; the racing, for a second, of an idle motor; the press of a clutch; the grind of a low gear, and then the huge contrivance, shaking and wobbling clumsily, began to move slowly forward in the water. Wallingford gripped the rails of his chair and set his jaws. He was in for it now!

A faster gear, and still a faster; the motor began to hum; the water seethed; the wind sprang crisply into their faces. A big vessel loomed up around the point, squarely in their seaway. String, steady as a post, dashed straight for it, and the big steamer appeared to rise out of the water like a huge, black tower. Suddenly the whole passenger-deck of the aeroplane shot backward, and the rigid String, up ahead, seemed to jump at the stars. Wallingford found himself lying on his back in his chair, holding to the rail with a clutch which hurt his knuckles, and beneath him he saw the steamer that had loomed in their way. It was only a small steamer, after all. Gradually the passengers felt themselves sitting up, as the deck slid slowly forward.

"Great work, Captain!" called young Peel, who had been arrested a hundred times for auto speeding.

"Tain't anything," denied String modestly. "Johnny'd 'a' cut a circle round it."

Wallingford slowly expelled the breath he had held all this time. The keen wind had stopped. There seemed no motion. There was almost no sound, except the steady purr of the motor and the low singing of the wires and the constant sharp fluttering of the canvas, which blended into a shrill, high note like the voice of a katydid. New York City, now brilliantly lighted,

slipped to the rear of them. Back there was the ocean, an arc of jet against the indigo of the sky.

"Great sport, Mr. Wallingford!" shouted Robertson, the famous swimmer, who had made the English Channel.

Wallingford felt the thump of a sharp knuckle in his ribs.

"Yes," he managed to reply, as heartily as he could, and tried to screw his neck around so that he could scowl at Blackie.

"What's she making, Captain?" called Prang, the crack yachtsman.

"Only about a hundred yet." And String, settled at last in his course, threw on more speed.

Vaporous land beneath them now, with here and there a village marked by a glow of light and traction-cars, like busy glow-worms, crawling steadily along. A city ahead. A sudden mist. A tilting, and a backward slide of the deck. A thick fog, which filled all space and shut out neighbor from neighbor, and hid the earth, the stars, even the broad wings and the rods which led up to them. Some one talked. The voice was startlingly clear. It should have sounded muffled, by all expectations. It was Viscount André's.

"I would not try this in a balloon," he said. "I had one struck by lightning." He rose, and they heard him climb the steep deck forward, pulling himself along by the backs of the chairs. His heavily swathed figure shut off the dim glow of light from String's steering-box. The fog turned blacker. They were in dense darkness.

Suddenly the whole world turned aflame! There was a burst of stifling heat, which burned within and without, and, silhouetted in the pale-blue fire, contorted faces gasped for breath; but there was no air to breathe! There was a sound which was not a sound—its concussion was so mighty and so much a part of them. Only for an instant this lasted, the passengers as rigid as if they had been frozen, while tiny streaks of incandescence ran raggedly among the rods; then the air-liner dropped a sheer five hundred feet out of that vacuum!

"*Voilà!*" called Viscount André, in an ecstasy of delight, as String eased her drop into an upcurving glide; and he patted String on both cheeks.

The thick darkness began to lessen. They were in a fog again, now in a mist, now up and in the clear air. They looked

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back, every man of them. They had passed through those angry rolling clouds still reverberating with the thunders of that lightning flash.

"Some speed!" exulted Blackie Daw, and there was an echo of approval for that sentiment.

"The next time Farrel gives a party, I'm coming!" declared Truller, who had a fine heart for a fat man.

That was a popular idea. Everybody congratulated Farrel, Wallingford, Blackie, String, themselves, and each other; and Farrel beamed with complacent pride as he thanked them and took most of the credit to himself.

"Now's your time," whispered Blackie into Wallingford's ear. "It's hot! Hit it!"

Wallingford drew his breath with a gurgling intake. He was plastered in his chair like a lump of putty, and his face was green.

"You spring it!" he asthmatically whispered in reply.

"You big flab!" In disgust Blackie rose and stepped into the narrow aisle, so that he could gaze down at the face of his highly respected senior partner. The opportunity was ripe. The psychological moment for which they had made this trip was at hand, and the psychological expert was as spineless as a tub of warm butter. Suddenly Blackie swung back his foot and delivered Wallingford a mighty kick on the shin. "I beg your pardon."

J. Rufus suppressed a howl, and glared black thunder at the grinning Mr. Daw.

"You do that again and I'll drop you overboard," he growled, as he rose, and then he pulled himself together.

"Well, gentlemen," he observed, in a voice which was rapidly assuming its hearty suavity; "it's a beautiful evening." He limped up the narrow aisle to where he could see them, and his face beamed. Blackie had brought the blood into it. "We have nothing ahead of us but space. If we had a lake-front landing in Chicago, we'd be settling on it by daybreak."

"Go right on!" shouted Peel.

"Never mind the landing!" called Blackie. "Land any place."

"I have a frontage there," offered Farrel. "I'll help the driver locate it."

"We're in luck," laughed Wallingford. "Farrel"—and he rested his heavy hand on the arm of that gentleman's chair, smiling

down at him jovially—"if you come into the New York & Chicago Air-plane Company, you'll have to turn over that Chicago landing."

"Couldn't do it," smiled Farrel. "The property's very valuable."

"Vacant?"

"That's its value." And Farrel laughed. "It's the keyhole to Chicago."

"I see." The big aeroplane gave a sudden dip which nearly threw Wallingford from his feet, and his face went fish-color for an instant; but he was at the crucial point of his business proposition, and that saved him from disintegration. "How about leasing the property to the company?"

Farrel looked over the edge of the rail at the clouds far beneath him and shook his head. "I've refused a dozen offers to make use of that frontage. I don't want to tie it up in any way."

"Farrel, be a sport!" called young Peel.

That was only the beginning of the fusillade. Farrel's distinguished friends were so enthusiastic over this remarkable night ride, and over the entire idea of the New York & Chicago Air-plane Limited, that they forced him into an action which he would not have considered under any other circumstances. He consented to lease that property under complicated restrictions—in the interest of sport.

V

PRESIDENT WICKERS, of the Manhattan & Lake Michigan Railroad, looked at the broad and genial Wallingford with a frown of annoyance.

"If I had known that you wished to sell me stock in an aeroplane company, I should not have found time for this interview," he frankly stated.

Mr. Wallingford smiled blandly and took a two-thousand-dollar diamond stick-pin out of his cravat. He laid the stick-pin on the desk.

"I'll bet you this against your jack-knife that I sell you all but fifty thousand dollars' worth of the stock in the New York & Chicago Air-plane Company before I leave this room," he confidently offered.

Mr. Wickers was a wiry man, with an immaculate gray mustache, and tortoiseshell-rimmed glasses from which depended a wide, black-silk cord. In his brow were the

creases he had built there with his railroad, but as he looked at the round, pink face of Wallingford, he suddenly grinned.

"When a man makes a bluff like that, he has something," he sagely decided; "but I don't mind risking a jack-knife." And producing the article in question from his pocket, he laid it beside the stick-pin.

"Much obliged," said Wallingford. "The first advantage to you in this little stock deal is the advertisement. When the Manhattan & Lake Michigan begins running the Air-plane Limited, there'll be nothing else talked about in this country."

Wickers shook his head.

"Too fancy," he objected. "You'll not win my jack-knife with that argument."

"I didn't expect to," confessed Wallingford. "I only threw that in for good measure. How's this?" And he handed to Mr. Wickers a neatly folded document.

The president of the Manhattan & Lake Michigan read half-way down the first typewritten page, and then, a smile of pleasure tilting his immaculate gray mustache, he slowly pushed the knife and stick-pin over to Wallingford, without looking up from the paper.

"How much do you want for control of that stock?" he asked, as he read on down to the signature.

"I won't sell you control," Wallingford drew a sheaf of stock-certificates from his pocket. "There are two thousand shares, and I'll sell you fifteen hundred of them."

"Huh!" grunted Wickers. "And I suppose you want par for them."

"A hundred and twenty-five," corrected Wallingford. "It amounts to one hundred and eighty-seven thousand five hundred dollars."

"Holy mackerel!" Wickers turned on him in astonishment. "You know we're not buying this land. We're only purchasing a privilege to lease it."

"For ninety-nine years," Wallingford reminded him. "The owner of the property don't know it, but the lease, as you will see, has a joker which permits that extension, at your option, after the first two years."

"But we have to run your infernal air-plane line for the entire ninety-nine years."

"It may be a good business by that time." And Wallingford chuckled until his eyes closed. "Mr. Wickers, the Manhat-

tan & Lake Michigan has been after this property of Farrel's for the past fifteen years. He wouldn't let you have it on account of his affiliations with the Midwest Central. Run an annual air-ship trip, and here's the keyhole to Chicago. This is a mighty nifty jack-knife, Mr. Wickers." And, examining it with interest, Wallingford slipped it into his pocket. He picked up his stick-pin and put it in his cravat.

"Robber!" charged the loser, but he grinned and rang for his secretary. "You figured that we had to have this property at any price."

"Certainly." And J. Rufus proffered a cigar. "That's why I schemed out this aeroplane company."

Wickers lit a match for himself and for Wallingford, and, as he blew his first puff of smoke at the ceiling, a smile of calm satisfaction began at the corners of his eyes.

"I look forward with great pleasure to the next stockholders' meeting of the New York & Chicago Air-plane Company," he observed. "It will be very interesting to see Farrel's face when I register this stock."

Blackie Daw looked up from Wickers' check with a grin of approval.

"Good work, Jim!" he said, and figured a moment. "Paying Johnny and his incorporators, and our expenses, this leaves us over a hundred thousand dollars to the merry. It was certainly worth the money."

Wallingford mopped his brow.

"I wouldn't take that ride again for a million!"

"Say, Jim, I told Jimmy and Toad they could go along when we took the checks down to Long Bay." Blackie picked up his little tablet of figures. "I counted that we'd pay Johnny and Mrs. Johnson and String and Plug a hundred dollars a share for their stock, of course."

"Of course," agreed Wallingford. "That's all we promised them."

Both men were silent for a moment.

"Do you remember the cake Mrs. Johnson gave the kids?" Blackie presently observed. Wallingford walked to the window and looked out.

"Let's pay the Johnsons at the rate of a hundred and twenty-five for their stock."

"Fine!" agreed Blackie, with enthusiasm. "That makes it a square deal!"

The next adventure of *Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford* will appear in the November issue.



DRAWN BY WILL FOSTER

At last his lean finger was outstretched at Veda. It seemed as if some imp of the perverse
were compelling her unwilling tongue to unlock its secrets

The Devil-worshippers

The death-thought, the charms, all the weird rites of the black art—what a jumble here of fascination for the frivolous and deep appeal to the intellectual and spiritual persons gathered strangely together in the Temple of the Occult! No wonder Craig Kennedy has to delve deep and long into science when Mrs. Blair appeals to him to save her from that malicious psychic attack which, she says, is driving her to death. How this wizard of Truth triumphs over that other wizard of Sham and Falsehood forms one of the most ingenious tales of this series, which is declared by Cosmopolitan readers to possess surpassing interest and to convey up-to-the-minute information in a most attractive fashion.

By Arthur B. Reeve

Author of "The Wireless Wire-tappers," "The Family Skeleton," and other Craig Kennedy stories

Illustrated by Will Foster

"I AM damned, Professor Kennedy, damned!"

The words rang out as the cry of a lost soul. A terrible look of inexpressible anguish and fear was written on the face of Craig's visitor as she uttered them and then sank back, trembling, in the easy chair, mentally and physically convulsed.

As nearly as I had been able to follow, Mrs. Veda Blair's story had dealt mostly with a Professor and Madame Rapport and something she called the "Red Lodge of the Temple of the Occult."

She was not exactly a young woman, although she was a very attractive one. She was of an age that is, perhaps, even more interesting than youth.

Veda Blair, I knew, had been, before her recent marriage to Seward Blair, a Treacy, of an old though somewhat unfortunate family. Both the Blairs and the Treacys had been intimate, and old Seward Blair, when he had died about a year before, had left his fortune to his son on condition that he marry Veda Treacy.

"Sometimes," faltered Mrs. Blair, "it is as though I had two souls. One of them is dispossessed of its body and the use of its organs, and is frantic at the sight of the other that has crept in."

She ended her rambling story, sobbing the terrible words: "Oh, I have committed the unpardonable sin! I am anathema—I am damned—damned!"

She said nothing of what terrible thing

she had done, and Kennedy, for the present, did not try to lead the conversation. But of all the stories that I have heard poured forth in the confessional of the detective's office, hers, I think, was the wildest.

Was she insane? At least I felt that she was sincere. Still, I wondered what sort of hallucination Craig had to deal with, as Veda Blair repeated the incoherent tale of her spiritual vagaries. Almost, I had begun to fancy that this was a case for a doctor, not for a detective, when suddenly she asked a most peculiar question.

"Can people affect you for good or evil merely by thinking about you?" she queried. Then a shudder passed over her. "They may be thinking about me now," she murmured in terror.

Her fear was so real and her physical distress so evident that Kennedy, who had been listening silently for the most part, rose and hastened to reassure her.

"Not unless you make your own fears affect yourself, and so play into their hands," he said earnestly.

Veda looked at him a moment.

"I have seen Doctor Vaughn," she said slowly. (Doctor Gilbert Vaughn, I recollected, was a well-known alienist in the city.) "He tried to tell me the same thing," she resumed doubtfully. "But—oh—I know what I know! I have felt the death-thought—and he knows it!"

"What do you mean?" inquired Kennedy, leaning forward keenly.

"The death-thought," she repeated, "a

The Devil-worshippers

malicious psychic attack. Some one is driving me to death by it. I thought I could fight it off. I went away to escape it. Now I have come back—and I have not escaped. There is always that disturbing influence—always—directed against me. I know it will—kill me!”

I listened, startled. The death-thought! What did it mean? What terrible power was it?

“You see,” she went on, heroically trying to control herself, “I have always been interested in the mysterious, the strange, the occult. In fact, my father and my husband’s father met through their common interest. So I come naturally by it.

“Not long ago I heard of Professor and Madame Rappport and their new Temple of the Occult. I went to it, and, later, Seward became interested, too. We have been taken into a sort of inner circle,” she continued, fearfully, as though there were some evil power in the very words themselves, “the Red Lodge.”

“You have told Doctor Vaughn?” shot out Kennedy suddenly, his eyes fixed on her face to see what it would betray.

Veda leaned forward, as if to tell a secret, then whispered in a low voice: “He knows. Like us—he—he is a—devil-worshiper!”

“What!” exclaimed Kennedy.

“A devil-worshiper,” she repeated. “You haven’t heard of the Red Lodge?”

Kennedy nodded negatively. “Could you get us—initiated?” he hazarded.

“P-perhaps,” she hesitated, in a half-frightened tone. “I—I’ll try to get you in to-night.”

She had risen, half dazed, as if her own timidity overwhelmed her.

“You—poor girl!” blurted out Kennedy, his sympathies getting the upper hand for the moment as he took the hand she extended mutely. “Trust me. I will do all in my power, all in the power of modern science to help you fight off this—influence.”

There must have been something magnetic, hypnotic in his eye.

“I will stop here for you,” she murmured, as she almost fled from the room.

Personally, I cannot say that I liked the idea of spying. It is not usually clean and wholesome. But I realized that occasionally it was necessary.

“We are in for it, now,” remarked Kennedy half humorously, half seriously, “to see the devil in the twentieth century.”

“And I,” I added, “I am, I suppose, to be the reporter to Satan.”

We said nothing more about it, but I thought much about it, and the more I thought the more incomprehensible the thing seemed. I had heard of devil-worship, but had always associated it with far-off India and other heathen lands—in fact never among Caucasians in modern times, except possibly in Paris. Was there such a cult here in my own city? I felt skeptical.

That night, however, promptly at the appointed time, a cab called for us, and in it was Veda Blair, nervous but determined.

“Seward has gone ahead,” she explained. “I told him that a friend had introduced you, that you had studied the occult abroad. I trust you to carry it out.”

Kennedy reassured her.

The curtains were drawn and we could see nothing outside, though we must have been driven several miles, far out into the suburbs.

At last the cab stopped. As we left it, we could see nothing of the building, for the cab had entered a closed courtyard.

“Who enters the Red Lodge?” challenged a sepulchral voice at the portecochère. “Give the password!”

“The serpent’s tooth,” Veda answered.

“Who are these?” asked the voice.

“Neophytes,” she replied, and a whispered parley followed.

“Then enter!” announced the voice.

It was a large room into which we were first ushered, to be inducted into the rites of Satan. There seemed to be both men and women, perhaps half a dozen votaries. Seward Blair was present. As I met him, I did not like the look in his eye; it was too staring. Doctor Vaughn was there, too, talking in a low tone to Madame Rappport. He shot a quick look at us. His were not eyes but gimlets that tried to bore into one’s very soul. Chatting with Seward Blair was a Mrs. Langhorne, a very beautiful woman. To-night she seemed to be unnaturally excited.

All seemed to be on most intimate terms, and, as we waited a few minutes, I could not help recalling some words of Huysmans: “The worship of the devil is no more insane than the worship of God. The worshippers of Satan are mystics—mystics of an unclean sort, it is true, but mystics none the less.”

I did not agree with this and did not repeat

it, of course, but a moment later I overheard Doctor Vaughn saying to Kennedy: "Hoffmann brought the devil into modern life. Poe foregoes the aid of demons and works patiently and precisely by the scientific method. But the result is the same."

"Yes," agreed Kennedy, for the sake of appearances, "in a sense, I suppose, we are all devil-worshippers in modern society—always have been. It is fear that rules, and we fear the bad—not the good."

As we waited, I felt more and more the sense of the mysterious, the secret, the unknown, which have always exercised a powerful attraction on the human mind.

In it, I felt, there was fascination for the frivolous and deep appeal to the intellectual and spiritual. The Temple of the Occult had evidently been designed to appeal to both types. I wondered how, like Lucifer, it had fallen. The prime requisite, I could guess already, however, was—money. Was it in its worship of the root of all evil that it had fallen?

We passed soon into another room, hung entirely in red, with weird, cabalistic signs all about on the walls. It was uncanny.

A huge reproduction in plaster of one of the most sardonic of Notre Dame's gargoyles seemed to preside over everything—a terrible figure in such an atmosphere.

As we entered, we were struck by the blinding glare of the light, in contrast with the darkened room in which we had passed our brief novitiate, if it might be called such.

Suddenly the lights were extinguished.

The great gargoyle shone with an infernal light of its own.

"Phosphorescent paint," whispered Kennedy to me.

Still, it did not detract from the weird effect to know what caused it.

There was a startling noise in the general hush.

"Sata!" cried one of the devotees.

A door opened, and there appeared the veritable priest of the devil—pale of face, nose sharp, mouth bitter, eyes glassy.

"That is Rapport," Vaughn whispered to me. The worshipers crowded forward.

Without a word, he raised his long, lean forefinger and began to single them out impressively. As he did so, each spoke, as if imploring aid. He came to Mrs. Langhorne.

"I have tried the charm," she cried earnestly, "and the one whom I love still hates me, while the one I hate loves me!"

"Concentrate!" replied the priest. "Concentrate! Think always: 'I love him. He must love me. I want him to love me. I love him. He must love me.' Over and over again you must think it. Then the other side: 'I hate him. He must leave me. I want him to leave me. I hate him—hate him.'"

Around the circle he went.

At last his lean finger was outstretched at Veda. It seemed as if some imp of the perverse were compelling her unwilling tongue to unlock its secrets.

"Sometimes," she cried, in a low, tremulous voice, "something seems to seize me, as if by the hand, and urge me onward. I cannot flee from it."

"Defend yourself!" answered the priest subtly. "When you know that some one is trying to kill you mentally, defend yourself! Work against it! Discourage! Intimidate! Destroy!"

I marveled at these cryptic utterances. They shadowed a modern black art of which I had had no conception—a recrudescence, in other language, of the age-old dualism of good and evil.

"Over and over again," he went on, speaking to her, "the same thought is to be repeated against an enemy. 'You know you are going to die! You know you are going to die!' Do it an hour, two hours, at a time. Others can help you, all thinking in unison the same thought."

What was this, I asked myself, breathlessly—a new transcendental toxicology?

Slowly a strange mephitic vapor seemed to exhale into the room—or was it my heightened imagination?

There came a sudden noise—nameless—striking terror, low, rattling. I stood rooted to the spot. What was it that held me? Was it an atavistic joy in the horrible, or was it merely a blasphemous curiosity? I scarcely dared to look.

At last I raised my eyes. There was a live snake, upraised, his fangs striking out viciously—a rattler!

I would have drawn back and fled, but Craig caught my arm.

"Caged," he whispered monosyllabically.

I shuddered. This, at least, was no drawing-room *diablerie*.

"It is Ophis," intoned Rapport, "the serpent—the one active form in nature that cannot be ungraceful!"

The appearance of the basilisk seemed to heighten the tension.

At last it broke loose, and then followed the most terrible blasphemies. The disciples, now all frenzied, surrounded closer the priest, the gargoyle, and the serpent.

They worshiped with howls and obscenities. Mad laughter mingled with pale fear and wild scorn, in turn, was written on the hectic faces about me. They had risen. It became a dance, a reel.

The votaries seemed to spin about on their axes, as it were, uttering a low, moaning chant as they whirled. It was a mania, the spirit of demonism. Something unseen seemed to urge them on. Disgusted and stifled at the surcharged atmosphere, I would have tried to leave, but I seemed frozen to the spot. I could think of nothing except Poe's "Masque of the Red Death."

Above all the rest whirled Seward Blair himself. The laugh of the fiend, for the moment, was in his mouth. An instant he stood—the oracle of the demon—devil-possessed. Around whirled the frantic devotees, howling.

Shrilly he cried, "The devil is in me!"

He reeled slowly through the crowd, crooning a quatrain in a low, monotonous voice, his eyelids drooping, and his head forward on his breast:

"If the Red Slayer think he slays,
Or the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep and pass and turn again!"

Entranced, the whirling crowd paused and watched. One of their number had received the "power."

He was swaying slowly to and fro.

"Look!" whispered Kennedy.

The man's fingers twitched; his head wagged uncannily. Perspiration seemed to ooze from every pore. His breast heaved.

He gave a sudden yell—ear-piercing. Then followed a screech of hellish laughter.

The dance had ended, the dancers spell-bound at the sight.

He was whirling slowly, eyes protruding now, mouth foaming, chest rising and falling like a bellows, muscles quivering. Cries, vows, imprecations, prayers—all blended in an infernal hubbub.

With a burst of ghastly, guttural laughter, he shrieked, "I *am* the devil!"

His arms waved—cutting, sawing, hack-

ing the air. The votaries, trembling, scarcely moved, breathed, as he danced.

Suddenly he gave a great leap into the air—then fell, motionless. They crowded around him. The fiendish look was gone—the demoniac laughter stilled. It was over.

The tension of the orgy had been too much for us. We parted with scarcely a word, and yet I could feel that among the rest there was a sort of unholy companionship.

Silently Kennedy and I drove away in the darkened cab, this time with Seward and Veda Blair and Mrs. Langhorne.

For several minutes not a word was said. I was, however, much occupied in watching the two women. It was not because of anything they said or did. That was not necessary. But I felt that there was a feud, something that set them against each other.

"How would Rapport use the death-thought, I wonder?" asked Craig speculatively, breaking the silence.

Blair answered quickly. "Suppose some one tried to break away, to renounce the lodge, expose its secrets. They would treat him so as to make him harmless—perhaps insane, confused, afraid to talk, paralyzed, or even to commit suicide or be killed in an accident. They would put the death-thought on him."

Even in the prosaic jolting of the cab, away from the terrible mysteries of the Red Lodge, one could feel the spell.

The cab stopped. Seward was on his feet and handed Mrs. Langhorne out at her home. For a moment they paused on the steps for an exchange of words.

In that moment I caught flitting over the face of Veda a look of hatred, more intense, more real, more awful than any that had been induced under the mysteries of the rites at the lodge.

It was gone in an instant, and as Seward rejoined us, I felt that, with Mrs. Langhorne gone, there was less restraint.

Although it was more comfortable, the rest of our journey was made in silence, and the Blairs dropped us at our apartment with many expressions of cordiality as we left them to proceed to their own.

"Of one thing I'm sure," I remarked, entering the room where, only a few short hours before, Mrs. Blair had related her strange tale. "Whatever the cause of it, the devil-dancers don't sham."

Kennedy did not reply. He was appar-



"What do you mean?" inquired Kennedy, leaning forward keenly. "The death-thought," she repeated, "a malicious psychic attack. Some one is driving me to death by it"

ently wrapped up in the consideration of the remarkable events of the evening. As for myself, it was a state of affairs which, the day before, I should have pronounced utterly beyond the wildest bounds of the imagination of the most colorful writer.

I glanced up to find Kennedy standing by the light, examining something he had apparently picked up at the Red Lodge. I bent over to look at it, too. It was a little glass tube.

"An ampulla, I believe the technical name of such a container is," he remarked, holding it closer to the light. In it were the remains of a dried yellow substance, broken up minutely, resembling crystals.

"Who dropped it?" I asked.

"Vaughn, I think," he replied. "At least, I saw him near Blair, stooping over him, at the end, and I imagine this is what I saw gleaming for an instant in the light."

Kennedy said nothing more, and, for my part, I was thoroughly at sea and could make nothing out of it all.

"What object can such a man as Doctor Vaughn possibly have in frequenting such a place?" I asked, at length, adding, "And there's that Mrs. Langhorne—she was interesting, too."

Kennedy made no direct reply. "I shall have them shadowed to-morrow," he said

briefly, "while I am at work in the laboratory over this ampulla."

As usual, also, Craig had begun on his scientific studies long before I was able to shake myself loose from the nightmares that haunted me after our weird experience.

He had already given the order to an agency for the shadowing, and his next move was to start me out, also, looking into the history of those concerned in the case. As far as I was able to determine, Doctor Vaughn had an excellent reputation, and I could find no reason whatever for his connection with anything of the nature of the Red Lodge. The Rapports seemed to be nearly unknown in New York, although it was reported that they had come from Paris lately. Mrs. Langhorne was a *divorcée* from one of the Western states, but little was known about her except that she always seemed to be well supplied with money. It seemed to be well known in the circle in which Seward Blair moved that he was friendly with her, and I had about reached the conclusion that she was unscrupulously making use of his friendship, perhaps was not above such a thing as blackmail.

Thus the day passed, and we heard no word from Veda Blair, although that was explained by the shadows, whose trails crossed in a most unexpected manner.

The Devil-worshippers

Their reports showed that there was a meeting at the Red Lodge during the late afternoon, at which all had been present except Doctor Vaughn. We learned, also, from them the exact location of the lodge, in an old house just across the line in Westchester County.

It was evidently a long and troublesome analysis that Craig was engaged in at the laboratory, for it was some hours after dinner, that night, when he came into the apartment, and even then he said nothing but buried himself in some of the technical works with which his library was stocked. He said little, but I gathered that he was in great doubt about something.

It was growing late, and Kennedy was still steeped in his books when the door of the apartment was suddenly thrown open and Seward Blair burst in on us, wildly excited.

"Veda is gone!" he cried, before either of us could ask him what was the matter.

"Gone!" repeated Kennedy. "How—where?"

"I don't know," Blair blurted out breathlessly. "We had been together this afternoon and I returned with her. Then I went out to the club after dinner for a while, and when I got back I missed her—not a quarter of an hour ago. I burst into her room—and there I found this note. Read it. I don't know what to do. No one seems to know what has become of her. I've called up all over and then thought perhaps you might help me, might know some friend of hers that I don't know, with whom she might have gone out."

Blair was plainly eager for us to help him. Kennedy took the paper. On it, in a trembling hand, were scrawled some words, evidently addressed to Blair himself:

You would forgive me and pity me, if you knew what I have been through.

When I refused to yield my will to the will of the lodge, I suppose I aroused the enmity of the lodge.

To-night, as I lay in bed, I felt that my hour had come, that mental forces that were almost irresistible were being directed against me.

I realized that I must fight not only for my sanity but for my life.

For hours I have fought that fight.

But during those hours, some one, I won't say who, seemed to have developed such psychic faculties of penetration that they were able to make their bodies pass through the walls of my room.

At last I am conquered. I pray that you—

The writing broke off abruptly.

"What does that mean?" asked Kennedy, "the 'will of the lodge'?"

Blair looked at us keenly. I fancied that there was even something accusatory in the look.

"Perhaps it was some mental reservation on her part," he suggested. "You do not know yourself of any reason why she should fear anything, do you?" he asked.

Kennedy did not betray, even by the motion of an eyelash, that he knew more than we should ostensibly.

There was a tap at the door. I sprang to open it, thinking perhaps, after all, it was Veda herself. Instead, a man—a stranger—stood there.

"Is this Professor Kennedy?" he asked, touching his hat. Craig nodded.

"I am from the psychopathic ward of the City Hospital—an orderly, sir," the man introduced.

"Yes," encouraged Craig, "what can I do for you?"

"A Mrs. Blair has just been brought in, sir, and we can't find her husband. She's calling for you, now."

Kennedy stared from the orderly to Seward Blair, startled, speechless.

"What has happened?" asked Blair anxiously. "I am Mr. Blair."

The orderly shook his head. He had delivered his message. That was all he knew.

"What do you suppose it is?" I asked, as we sped across-town in a taxi-cab. "Is it the curse that she dreaded?"

Kennedy said nothing, and Blair appeared to hear nothing. His face was drawn in tense lines.

The psychopathic ward is at once one of the most interesting and one of the most depressing departments of a large city hospital, harboring, as it does, all from the more-or-less harmless insane to violent alcoholics and wrecked drug fiends.

Mrs. Blair had been found hatless, without money, dazed, having fallen, after an apparently aimless wandering, in the streets.

For the moment she lay exhausted on the white bed of the ward, eyes glazed, pupils contracted, pulse now quick, now almost evanescent, face drawn, breathing difficult, moaning now and then in physical and mental agony. Until she spoke, it was impossible to tell what had happened, but the ambulance surgeon had found a little red mark on her white forearm and had pointed it out, evidently with the idea that she was suffering from a drug.

At the mere sight of the mark, Blair stared as though hypnotized. Leaning over to Kennedy, so that the others could not hear, he whispered, "It is the mark of the serpent!"

Our arrival had been announced to the hospital physician, who entered and stood for a moment looking at the patient.

"I think it is a drug—a poison," he said meditatively.

"You haven't found out yet what it is, then?" asked Craig.

The physician shook his head doubtfully.

"Whatever it is," he said slowly, "it is closely allied to the cyanide groups in its rapacious activity. I haven't the slightest idea of its true nature, but it seems to have a powerful affinity for important nerve-centers of respiration and muscular co-ordination, as well as for disorganizing the blood. I should say that it produces death by respiratory paralysis and convulsions. To my mind it is an exact, though perhaps less active, counterpart of hydrocyanic acid."

Kennedy had been listening intently at the start, but before the physician had finished, he had bent over and made a ligature quickly with his handkerchief.

Then he despatched a messenger with a note. Next he cut about the minute wound on her arm until the blood flowed, cupping it to increase the flow. Now and then he had them administer a little stimulant.

He had worked rapidly, while Blair watched him with a sort of fascination.

"Get Doctor Vaughn," ordered Craig, as soon as he had a breathing-spell after his quick work, adding, "and Professor and Madame Rapport. Walter, attend to that, will you? I think you will find an officer outside. You'll have to compel them to come, if they won't come otherwise," he added, giving the address of the lodge.

Blair shot a quick look at him, as though Craig in his knowledge were uncanny. Apparently, the address had been a secret which he thought we did not know.

I managed to find an officer and despatch him for the Rapparts. A hospital orderly, I thought, would serve to get Vaughn.

I had scarcely returned to the ward, when, suddenly, an unnatural strength seemed to be infused into Veda. She had risen in bed.

"It shall not catch me!" she cried, in a new paroxysm of nameless terror. "No—

no—it is pursuing me! I am never out of its grasp! I have been thought six feet underground—I know it! There it is again—still driving me—still driving me! Will it never stop? Will no one stop it? Save me! It—is the death-thought!"

She had risen convulsively and had drawn back in abject, cowering terror. What was it she saw? It was very real and very awful. It pursued her relentlessly.

As she lay there, rolling her eyes about, she caught sight of us and recognized us for the first time, although she had been calling for us.

"They had the thought on you, too, Professor Kennedy," she almost screamed. "Hour after hour, Rapport and the rest repeated over and over again, 'Why does not some one kill him? Why does he not die?' They knew you—even when I brought you to the Red Lodge. They thought you were a spy."

I turned to Kennedy. He had advanced, and was leaning over to catch every word. Blair was standing behind me, and she had not seen her husband yet. A quick glance showed me that he was trembling from head to foot like a leaf, as though he, too, were pursued by the nameless terror.

"What did they do?" Kennedy asked, in a low voice.

Fearfully, gripping the bars of the iron bed, as though they were some tangible support for her mind, she answered: "They would get together. 'Now, all of you,' they said, 'unite yourselves in thought against our enemy, against Kennedy, that he must leave off persecuting us. He is ripe for destruction!'"

Kennedy glanced sidewise at me, with a significant look.

"God grant," she implored, "that none haunt me for what I have done in my ignorance!"

Just then the door opened and my messenger entered, accompanied by Doctor Vaughn. I had turned to catch the expression on Blair's face just in time. It was a look of abject appeal.

Before Doctor Vaughn could ask a question or fairly take in the situation, Kennedy had faced him.

"What was the purpose of all that elaborate mummerly out at the Red Lodge?" asked Kennedy, pointblank.

I think I looked at Craig in no less amazement than Vaughn. In spite of the

dramatic scenes through which we had passed, the spell of the occult had not fallen on him for an instant.

"Mummery?" repeated Doctor Vaughn, bending his penetrating eyes on Kennedy, as if he would force him to betray himself first.

"Yes," reiterated Craig; "you know as well as I do that it has been said that it is a well-established fact that the world wants to be deceived and is willing to pay for the privilege."

Doctor Vaughn still gazed from one to the other of us defiantly.

"You know what I mean," persisted Kennedy, "the mumbo-jumbo—just as the Haitian obi-man sticks pins in a doll or melts a wax figure of his enemy. That is supposed to be an outward sign. But back of this terrible power that people believe moves in darkness and mystery is something tangible—something real."

Doctor Vaughn looked up sharply at him, I think mistaking Kennedy's meaning. If he did, all doubt that Kennedy attributed anything to the supernatural was removed as he went on, "At first I had no explanation of the curious events I have just witnessed, and the more I thought about them, the more obscure they seemed.

"I have tried to reason the thing out," he continued thoughtfully. "Did autosuggestion, self-hypnotism, explain what I have seen? Has Veda Blair been driven almost to death by her own fears only?"

No one interrupted, and he answered his own question. "Somehow, the idea that it was purely fear that had driven her on did not satisfy me. As I said, I wanted something more tangible. I could not help thinking that it was not merely subjective. There was something objective, some force at work, something more than psychic in the result achieved by this criminal mental marauder, whoever it is."

I was following Kennedy's reasoning closely. As he proceeded, the point that he was making seemed more clear to me.

Persons of a certain type of mind could be really mentally unbalanced by such methods as we had heard outlined, where the mere fact of another trying to exert power over them became known to them. They would, as a matter of fact, unbalance themselves, thinking about and fighting off imaginary terrors.

Such people, I could readily see, might be

quickly controlled, and in the wake of such control would follow stifled love, wrecked homes, ruined fortunes, suicide, and even death.

Doctor Vaughn leaned forward critically. "What did you conclude, then, was the explanation of what you saw last night?" he asked sharply.

Kennedy met his question squarely, without flinching. "It looks to me," he replied quietly, "like a sort of hysteroleptisy. It is well known, I believe, to demonologists—those who have studied this sort of thing. They have recognized the contortions, the screams, the wild, blasphemous talk, the cataleptic rigidity. They are epileptiform."

Vaughn said nothing but continued to weigh Kennedy as if in a balance. I, who knew him, knew that it would take a greater than Vaughn to find him wanting, once Kennedy chose to speak. As for Vaughn, was he trying to hide behind some technicality in medical ethics?

"Doctor Vaughn," continued Craig, as if goading him to the point of breaking down his calm silence, "you are specialist enough to know these things as well, better than I do. You must know that epileptisy is one of the most peculiar diseases.

"The victim may be in good physical condition, apparently. In fact, some hardly know that they have it. But it is something more than merely the fits. Always there is something wrong mentally. It is not the motor disturbance so much as the disturbance of consciousness."

Kennedy was talking slowly, deliberately, so that none could drop a link in the reasoning.

"Perhaps one in ten epileptics has insane periods, more or less," he went on, "and there is no more dangerous form of insanity. Self-consciousness is lost, and in this state of automatism the worst of crimes have been committed without the subsequent knowledge of the patient. In that state, they are no more responsible than are the actors in one's dreams."

The hospital physician entered, accompanied by Craig's messenger, breathless. Craig almost seized the package from his hands and broke the seal.

"Ah, this is what I wanted!" he exclaimed with an air of relief, forgetting, for the time, the exposition of the case that he was engaged in. "Here I have some anticrotalus

venin, of Doctors Flexner and Noguchi. Fortunately, in the city it is within easy reach."

Quickly, with the aid of the physician, he injected it into Veda's arm.

"Of all substances in nature," he remarked, still at work over the unfortunate woman, "none is so little known as the venom of serpents."

It was a startling idea which the sentence had raised in my mind. All at once I recalled the first remark of Seward Blair, in which he had repeated the password that had admitted us into the Red Lodge—"the serpent's tooth." Could it have been that she had really been bitten at some of the orgies by the serpent which they worshiped hideously hissing in its cage? I was sure that, at least until they were compelled, none would say anything about it. Was that the interpretation of the almost hypnotized look on Blair's face?

"We know next to nothing of the composition of the protein bodies in the venoms which have such terrific, quick physiological effects," Kennedy was saying. "They have been studied, it is true, but we cannot really say that they are understood—or

even that there are any adequate tests by which they can be recognized. The fact is, that snake venoms are about the safest of poisons for the criminal."

Kennedy had scarcely propounded this startling idea when a car was heard outside. The Rapports had arrived, with the officer I had sent after them, protesting and threatening. They quieted down a bit as they entered and, after a quick glance around, saw who was present.

Professor Rapport gave one glance at the victim lying exhausted on the bed, then drew back melodramatically and cried, "The serpent—the mark of the serpent!"

For a moment, Kennedy gazed full in the eyes of them all.

"Was it a snake-bite?" he asked slowly; then, turning to Mrs. Blair, after a quick glance, he went on rapidly, "The first thing to ascertain is whether the mark consists of two isolated punctures, from the poison-conducting teeth, or fangs, of the snake, which are constructed like a hypodermic needle."

The hospital physician had bent over her at the words, and, before Kennedy could go on, interrupted, "This was not a snake-



Kennedy was still steeped in his books when the door of the apartment was suddenly thrown open and Seward Blair burst in on us, wildly excited

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bite; it was more likely from an all-glass hypodermic syringe with a platinum-iridium needle."

Professor Rapport, priest of the devil, advanced a step, menacingly, toward Kennedy.

"Remember," he said in a low, angry tone, "remember—you are pledged to keep the secrets of the Red Lodge!"

Craig brushed aside the sophistry with a sentence. "I do not recognize any secrets that I have to keep about the meeting this afternoon to which you summoned the Blairs and Mrs. Langhorne, according to reports from the shadows I had placed on Mrs. Langhorne and Doctor Vaughn."

If there is such a thing as the evil eye, Rapport's must have been a pair of them, as he realized that Kennedy had resorted to the simple device of shadowing the devotees.

A cry, almost a shriek, startled us. Kennedy's encounter with Rapport had had an effect which none of us had considered. The step or two in advance which the prophet had taken had brought him into the line of vision of the still half-stupefied Veda lying back of Kennedy on the hospital cot.

The mere sight of him, the sound of his voice, and the mention of the Red Lodge had been sufficient to penetrate that stupor. She was sitting bolt upright, a ghastly, trembling specter. Slowly a smile seemed to creep over the cruel face of the mystic. Was it not a recognition of his hypnotic power?

Kennedy turned and laid a gentle hand on the quaking, convulsed figure of the woman. One could feel the electric tension in the air, the battle of two powers for good or evil. Which would win—the old fascination of the occult or the new power of science?

It was a dramatic moment. Yet not so dramatic as the outcome. To my surprise, neither won.

Suddenly Veda caught sight of her husband. Her face changed. All the prehistoric jealousy of which woman is capable seemed to blaze forth.

"I will defend myself!" she cried. "I will fight back! She shall not win—she shall not have you—no—she shall not—never!"

I recalled the strained feeling between the two women that I had noticed in the

cab. Was it Mrs. Langhorne who had been the disturbing influence, whose power she feared, over herself and over her husband?

Rapport had fallen back a step, but not from the mind of Kennedy.

"Here!" challenged Craig, facing the group and drawing from his pocket the glass ampulla, "I picked this up at the Red Lodge, last night."

He held it out in his hand before the Rapports so that they could not help but see it. Were they merely good actors? They betrayed nothing, at least by face or action.

"It is crotalin," he announced, "the venom of the rattlesnake—*crotalus horridus*. It has been noticed that persons suffering from certain diseases, of which epilepsy is one, after having been bitten by a rattlesnake, if they recover from the snake-bite, are cured of the disease."

Kennedy was forging straight ahead, now, in his exposure. "Crotalin," he continued, "is one of the new drugs used in the treatment of epilepsy. But it is a powerful, two-edged instrument. Some one who knew the drug, who perhaps had used it, has tried an artificial bite of a rattler on Veda Blair, not for epilepsy but for another, diabolical purpose, thinking to cover up the crime, either as the result of the so-called death-thought of the lodge or as the bite of the real rattler at the lodge."

Kennedy had at last got under Doctor Vaughn's guard. All his reticence was gone.

"I joined the cult," he confessed. "I did it in order to observe and treat one of my patients for epilepsy. I justified myself. I said, 'I will be the exposé, not the accomplice, of this modern Satanism.' I joined it, and—"

"There is no use trying to shield anyone, Vaughn," rapped out Kennedy, scarcely taking time to listen. "An epileptic of the most dangerous criminal type has arranged this whole elaborate setting as a plot to get rid of the wife who brought him his fortune and now stands in the way of his unholy love for Mrs. Langhorne. He used you to get the poison with which you treated him. He used the Rapports with money to play on her mysticism by their so-called death-thought, while he watched his opportunity to inject the fatal crotalin."

Craig faced the criminal, whose eyes now showed more plainly than words his deranged mental condition, and in a low tone, added, "The devil is in you, Seward Blair!"

The Seven Darlings

By Gouverneur Morris

Author of "The Penalty," "A Perfect Gentleman of Pelham Bay Park," etc.

Illustrated by Howard Chandler Christy

SYNOPSIS—The six Darling sisters—Mary, Maud, Eve, and the triplets, Lee, Phyllis, and Gay—and their brother Arthur find themselves, on the death of their father, with almost nothing. Their divorced mother has married an Italian nobleman, and, having a son by him, cannot be expected to assist them. Their chief asset is a magnificently appointed Adirondack camp, which they decide to run as a hotel at high rates. Into a magazine advertisement of The Camp, Gay and Lee surreptitiously put a picture of the six girls in bathing-costume. This brings quick response from Samuel Langham, a middle-aged oil millionaire, who arranges to come with a party of five young men before the season is open. One of them is an Englishman, Pritchard, heir of the Earl of Merrivale. The guests insist on fishing for trout (or char) as soon as they arrive, and, owing to a momentary shortage of guides, Gay undertakes to take charge of Pritchard. She discovers that he knows much more about the habits of fish and the piscatorial art than she does. A discussion takes place as to the size of the largest char that will be caught. Pritchard bets her his prospective title that it will be over three pounds, and Gay bets him her yearly dividend from The Camp that it won't. A fish is located. They land, and preparations are made for its capture.

GAY'S notion of scientific fishing might have been thus summed: Know just where to fish, and use the lightest rod made. Her own trout-rod weighed two and a half ounces without the reel. Compared to it, Pritchard's was a coarse and heavy instrument. His weighed six ounces.

"You could land a salmon with that," said Gay scornfully.

"I have," said Pritchard. "It's a splendid rod. I doubt if you could break it."

"Doesn't give the fish much of a run for his money."

"But how about this, Miss Gay?"

He showed her a leader of finest water-blue catgut. It was nine feet long and tapered from the thickness of a human hair to that of a thread of spider-spinning. Gay's waning admiration glowed once more.

"That wouldn't hold a minnow," she said.

"We must see about that," he answered; "we must hope that it will hold a very large char."

He mounted eighty or ninety feet of line, and began to grease it with a white tallow.

"What's that stuff?" Gay asked.

"Red-deer fat."

"What for?"

"To make the line float. We're fishing with a dry fly, you know."

Gay noticed that the line was tapered from very heavy to very fine.

"Why is that?" she asked.

"It throws better—especially in a wind. The heavy part will carry a fly out into half a gale."

He reeled in the line, and made his leader fast to it with a swift, running hitch, and to the fine end of the leader he attached the fly which they had chosen. Upon this tiny and exquisite arrangement of hairpin-hook, gray silk, and feathers, he blew paraffin from a pocket atomizer that it might float and not become water-logged.

"Do we fish from the shore or the boat?" Gay asked.

"From this shore."

"You'll never reach there from this shore."

"Then I've misjudged the distance. Are you going to use the landing-net for me, in case it's necessary?"

Gay caught up the net and once more followed his stealthy advance upon the brook.

Pritchard had one preliminary look through the field-glasses, straightened his bent back, turned to her with a sorrowing face, and spoke aloud.

"He's had enough," he said; "he's stopped feeding."

Gay burst out laughing.

"And our fishing is over for the day? This shall be said of you, Mr. Pritchard,

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that you are a merciful man. You are not what is called in this country a 'game hog.'"

"Thank you," he said gravely. "But if you think the fishing is over for the day, you don't know a dry-fly fisherman when you see one. We made rather a late start. See, most of the fish have stopped feeding. They won't begin again much before three. The big fellow will be a little later. He has had more than the others; he is older; his digestion is no longer like chain lightning; he will sleep sounder, and dream of the golden days of his youth when a char was a trout."

"*That*," said Gay, "is distinctly unkind. I have been snubbed enough for one day. Are we to stand here, then, till three or four o'clock, till his royal highness wakes up and calls for breakfast?"

"No," said Pritchard; "though I would do so gladly, if it were necessary, in order to take this particular fish——"

"You might kneel before your rod," said Gay, "like a knight watching his arms."

"To rise in the morning and do battle for his lady—I repeat I should do so gladly if it would help my chances in the slightest. But it wouldn't." He rested his rod very carefully across two bushes.

"The thing for us to do," he went on, "is to have lunch. I've often heard of how comfortable you American guides can make the weary wayworn wanderer at the very shortest notice."

"Is that a challenge?"

"It is an expression of faith."

Their eyes met, and even lingered.

"In that case," said Gay, "I shall do what I may. There is cold lunch in the boat, but the wayworn one shall bask in front of a fire and look upon his food when it is piping hot. Come!"

Gay rowed him out of the brook and along the shore of the lake for a couple of miles. She was on her mettle. She wished him to know that she was no lounging in woodcraft. She put her strong young back into the work of rowing, and the fragile guide-boat flew. Her cheeks glowed and her lips were parted in a smile, but secretly she was filled with dread. She knew that she had brought food, raw and cooked; she could see the head of her ax gleaming under the middle seat; she would trust Mary for having seen to it that there was pepper and salt; but whether in the pocket of the Norfolk jacket

there were matches, she could not be sure. If she stopped rowing to look, the Englishman would think that she had stopped because she was tired. And if, later, it was found that she had come away without matches, he would laugh at her and her pretenses to being a "perfectly good guide."

She beached the boat upon the sand in a wooded cove, and before Pritchard could move had drawn it high and dry out of the water. Then she laughed aloud, and would not tell him why. She had discovered in the right-hand pocket of her coat two boxes of safety-matches, and in the left pocket three.

She lifted the boat easily and carried it into the woods. Pritchard had wished to help.

"But," said Gay, "this is my job."

She laid the boat upon soft moss at the side of a narrow, mounting trail, slung the package of lunch upon her shoulders, and caught up her ax.

"Don't I help at all?" asked Pritchard.

"You are weary and wayworn," said Gay; "and I suppose I ought to carry you, too. But I can't. Can you follow? It's not far."

A quarter of a mile up the hillside, between virgin pines which made one think bitterly of what the whole mountains might be if the science of forestry had been imported a little earlier in the century, the steep and stony trail ended in an open space, gravelly and abounding in huge boulders, upon which the sun shone warm and bright. In the midst of the place was a spring, black and slowly bubbling.

"Wait here," commanded Gay.

Her ax sounded in a thicket, and she emerged presently, staggering under a load of balsam. She spread it in two great fragrant mats. Then once more she went forth with her ax and returned with firewood. Pritchard, a wistful expression in his eyes, studied her goings and her comings, and listened, as to music, to the sharp, true ringing of her ax.

"By Jove," said he to himself, "that isn't perspiration on her forehead—it's honest sweat!"

In spite of the bright sunshine, the heat of the fire was wonderfully welcome, and began to bring out the strong, delicious aroma of the balsam. Gay sat upon her heels before the fire and cooked. There was a sound of boiling and bubbling. The

fragrance of coffee mingled with the balsam and floated heavenward. During the swift preparation of lunch, they hardly spoke. Twice Pritchard begged to help, and was twice refused.

Gay spread a cloth between the mats of balsam, upon one of which Pritchard reclined, and she laid out hot plates and bright silver with demure precision.

"Miss Gay," he said very earnestly, "I came to chuckle; I thought that, at least, you would burn the chicken and get smoke in your eyes, but I remain to worship the deity of woodcraft."

Gay swelled a little. She had worked very hard; nothing had gone wrong, so far. She was not in the least ashamed of herself. But her greatest triumph was to come.

Uncas, the chipmunk, had that morning gone for a stroll in the forest. He had the spring fever. He had crossed Placid Brook, by a fallen log; he had climbed trees, hunted for last-year's nuts, and fought battles of repartee with other chipmunks. About lunch-time, thinking to return to Arthur and recount the tale of his wanderings, he smelled a smell of cooking and heard a sound of voices, one of which was familiar to him. He climbed a boulder overlooking the clearing and began to scold. Gay and Pritchard looked up.

"My word," said Pritchard, "what a bold little beggar!"

Now, to Gay, the figure of Uncas, well larded with regular meals, was not to be confounded with the slim little stripes of the spring woods. She knew him at once, and she spoke nonchalantly to Pritchard.

"If you're a great deal in the woods," she said, "you scrape acquaintance with many of the inhabitants. That little pig and I are old friends. You embarrass him a little. He doesn't know you. If you weren't here, he'd come right into my lap and beg."

Pritchard looked at her gravely.

"Truly?" he said.

"I think he will, anyway," said Gay, and she made sounds to Uncas which reassured him and brought him presently on a tearing run for her lap. Here, when he had been fed, he stretched himself and fell asleep.

"Monogle's sister!" said Pritchard reverently. "Child, are these the scars of wolves' teeth on your wrists and ankles?"

"No, Octogenarian," said Gay; "they aren't any marks of any kind. What time is it?"

"It is half-past two."

"Then you shall smoke a cigarette, while I wash dishes."

She slid the complaining Uncas from her lap to the ground.

"Unfortunately," said Pritchard, "I didn't bring a cigarette."

"And you've been dying for a smoke all this time? Why don't you ask the guide for what you want?"

"Have you such a thing?"

"I have."

"But you—you yourself don't—do you?" He looked troubled.

"No," said Gay. "But my father was always forgetting his, and it made him so miserable I got into the habit of carrying a full case years ago, whenever we went on expeditions. He used to be so surprised and delighted. Sometimes I think he used to forget his on purpose, so that I could have the triumph of producing mine."

Pritchard smoked at ease. Gay "washed up." Uncas, roused once more from slumber by the call of one of his kind, shook himself and trotted off into the forest.

Gay, scouring a pan, was beginning to feel that she had known Pritchard a long time. She had made him comfortable, cared for him in the wild woods, and the knowledge warmed her heart.

Pritchard was saying to himself,

"We like the same sort of things—why not each other?"

"Miss Gay," he said aloud.

"What?"

"In case I land the three-pounder and over, I think I ought to tell you that I'm not very rich, and I know you aren't. Would that matter to you? I've just about enough," he went on tantalizingly, "to take a girl on ripping good trips into central Africa or Australia, but I can't keep any great state in England—Merrivale isn't a show place, you know."

"However much," said Gay, "I may regret my bet, there was nothing Indian about it. I'm sure that you are a clean, upright young man. I'm a decent sort of girl, though I say it that shouldn't. We might do worse. I've heard that love-matches aren't always what they are cracked up to be. And I'm quite sure that I want to go to Africa and hunt big game."

"Thank you," said Pritchard humbly. "And at least there would be love on one side."



DRAWN BY HOWARD CHANDLER CHRISTY



"Young Renier is as innocent of evil as Miss Lee herself. If they take a fancy to each other—of course it's none of my business, but, my dear Miss Darling, why not?"

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"Nonsense," said Gay briskly. "I'm ready—if you are."

Pritchard jumped to his feet and threw away his cigarette.

"Now," he said, "that you've proved everything, *won't* you let me help?"

Gay refused him doubtfully, and then, with a burst of generosity,

"Why yes," she said, "and, by the way, Mr. Pritchard, there was no magic about the chipmunk. He's one my brother trained. He lives at The Camp, and he was just out for a stroll and happened in on us. I don't want you to find out that I'm a fraud from anyone—but me."

X

THE big trout was once more feeding, and Pritchard began to cast his diminutive fly up-stream and across. But he cast and got out line by a system that was new to Gay. He did not "whip" the brook; he whipped the air above it. He never allowed his fly to touch the water but drew it back sharply, and at the same time reeled out more line with his left hand when it had fallen to within an inch or two of the surface. His casts, straight as a rifle-shot, lengthened and reached out toward the boulder-point near which the big trout was feeding, until he was throwing, and with consummate ease, a line longer than Gay had ever seen thrown.

"It's beautiful," she whispered. "Will you teach me?"

"Of course," he answered.

His fly hovered just above the ring which the trout had just made. Pritchard lengthened his line a foot, and cast again and again with no further change but of an inch or two in direction.

"There's a little current," he explained. "If we dropped the fly into the middle of the ring, it would float just over his tail and he wouldn't see it. He's looking up-stream, whence his blessings flow. The fly must float straight down at him, dragging its leader and not dragged by it."

All the while he talked he continued casting with compact, twirly strokes of his right wrist and forearm. At last, his judgment being satisfied by the hovering position attained by fly and leader, he relaxed his grip of the rod; the fly fell upon the water like thistle-down, floated five or six inches, and was sucked under by the big trout. Pritchard struck hard.

There was a second's pause, while the big trout, pained and surprised, tried to gather his scattered wits. Three-quarters of Pritchard's line floated loosely across the brook, but the leader and the fly remained under, and Pritchard knew that he had hooked his fish.

Then, and it was sudden—like an explosion—the whole length of floating line, disappeared, and the tip of Pritchard's powerful rod was dragged under after it.

The reel screamed.

"It's a whale!" shouted Gay, forgetting how much depended upon the size of the fish. "A whale!"

The time for stealthy movements and talk in whispers was over. Gay laughed, shouted, exhorted, while Pritchard, his lips parted, his cheeks flushed, gaily fought the great fish.

"Go easy; go easy!" cried Gay. "That hook will never hold him!"

But Pritchard knew his implements, and fished with a kind of joyous, strong fury.

"When you hook 'em," he exulted, "land 'em."

The trout was a great, noble potentate of those waters. Years ago he had abandoned the stealthy ways of lesser fish. He came into the middle of the brook where the water is deep and there is freedom from weeds and sunken timber, and then up and down and across and across, with blind, furious rushes, he fought his fight.

It was the strong man without science against the strong man who knows how to box. The steady, furious rushes, snubbed and controlled, became jerky and spasmodic; in a roar and swirl of water the king trout showed his gleaming and enormous back; a second later, the sunset colors of his side and the white of his belly. Inch by inch, swollen by impotent fury, galvanically struggling and rushing, he followed the drag of the leader toward the beach, where, ankle-deep in the water, Gay crouched with the landing-net.

She trembled from head to foot as a well-bred pointer trembles when he has found a covey of quail and holds them in control, waiting for his master to walk in upon them.

The big trout, still fighting, turning, and raging, came toward the mouth of the half-submerged net.

"How big is he, Miss Gay?"

The voice was cool and steady.

"He's five pounds if he's an ounce," her

voice trembled. "He's the biggest trout that ever swam."

"He *isn't* a trout," said Pritchard; "he's a char."

If Gay could have seen Pritchard's face, she would have been struck for the first time by a sort of serene beauty that pervaded some of its expressions. The smile which he turned upon her crouching figure had in it a something almost angelic.

"Bring him a little nearer," she cried, "just a little."

"You're sure he weighs more than three pounds?"

"Sure—sure—don't talk, land him, land him!"

For answer, Pritchard heaved strongly upward upon his rod and lifted the mighty fish clear of the water. One titanic convulsion of tortured muscles, and what was to be expected happened. The leader broke a few inches from the trout's lip, and he returned splashing to his native element, swam off slowly, just under the surface, then dove deep, and was seen no more.

"Oh!" cried Gay. "Why *did* you? Why *did* you?"

She had forgotten everything but the fact that the most splendid of all trout had been lost.

"Why did you?" she cried again.

"Because," he said serenely and gently, smiling into her grieved and flushed face, "I wouldn't have you as the payment of a bet. I will have you as a gift or not at all."

They returned to The Camp, Pritchard rowing.

"I owe you your prospective dividends for the year," he said. "If they are large, I shall have to give you my note and pay as I can." She did not answer.

"I think you are angry with me," he said.

"I was thinking," said Gay, "that you are very good at fishing, but that the art of rowing an Adirondack guide-boat has been left out of you."

"Truly," he said, "was that what you were thinking?"

"No," she said; "I was thinking other things. I was thinking that I ought to go down on my knees and thank you for breaking the leader. You see, I'd made up my mind to keep my word. And well, of course it's a great escape for me."

"Why? Was the prospect of marrying me so awful?"

"The prospect of marrying a man who would rather lose a five-pound fish than marry me—was awful."

Pritchard stopped rowing, and his laughter went abroad over the quiet lake until presently Gay's forehead smoothed and, after a prelude of dimples, she joined gaily in. When Pritchard could speak, he said, "You don't really think that, do you?"

"I don't know what I think," said Gay. "I'm just horrid and cross and spoiled. Don't let's talk about it any more."

"But I said," said he, "I said, 'As a bet, no; but as a gift'—oh, with what rapture and delight!"

"Do you mean that?" She looked him in the face with level eyes.

Once more he stopped rowing.

"I love you," he said, "with my whole heart and soul."

"Don't," said Gay, "don't spoil a day that, for all its ups and downs, has been a good day, a day that, on the whole, I've loved—and let's hurry, please, because I stood in the water and it was icy."

After that, Pritchard rowed with heroic force and determination; he lacked, however, the knack which curving oar-handles demand, and at every fifteenth or sixteenth stroke knocked a piece of "bark" from his knuckles. Smarting with pain, he smiled gently at her from time to time.

"Will you guide me to-morrow?"

"To-morrow," she said, "there will be enough real guides to go around."

"You really are, aren't you?" he said.

"What?"

"Angry with me."

"Oh no—I think—that what you said—what you said—was a foolish thing to say. If I came to you with my sisters Lee and Phyllis, you wouldn't know which of the three I was, and yet—you said—"

"It isn't a question of words—it's a question of feeling. Do you really think I shouldn't know you from your sisters?"

"I am sure of it," said Gay.

"But if you weren't?"

"Then I should still think that you had tried to be foolish, but I shouldn't be angry."

"How," said Pritchard, his eyes twinkling, "shall I convince the girl I love—that I know her by sight?"

Gay laughed.

"To-night," she said, "when you have dined, walk down to the dock alone. One of us three will come to you and say, 'Too

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bad we didn't have better luck.' And you won't know if she's Lee or Phyllis or I."

Pritchard smoked upon the dock in the light of an arc-lamp. A vision, smiling, and rosy, swept out of the darkness, and said, "Too bad we didn't have better luck!"

"I beg your pardon," said Pritchard; "you're not Miss Gay, but I haven't had the pleasure of being presented to Miss Lee or Miss Phyllis."

The vision chuckled and beat a swift, giggling retreat to a dark spot among the pines, where other giggles awaited her.

A second vision came.

"Too bad we didn't have better luck!"

Pritchard smiled gravely into the vision's eyes, and said, in so low a voice that only she could hear: "Bad luck? I have learned to love you with all my heart and soul."

Silence. An answering whisper.

"How did you know me?"

"How? Because my heart says here is the only girl in all the world—see how different, how more beautiful and gentle she is than all other girls."

"But I'm not Gay—I'm Phyllis."

"If you are Phyllis," he whispered, "then you never were Gay."

She laughed softly.

"I am Gay."

"Why tell me? I know. Am I forgiven?"

"There is nothing," she said swiftly, "to forgive." And she fled.

To her sisters waiting among the pines she gave explanation.

"Of course he knew me."

"How?"

"Why, he said there couldn't be any doubt; he said I was so very much better-looking than any sister of mine could possibly be."

Forthwith Lee pinioned Gay's arms and Phyllis pulled her ears for her.

Mr. Pritchard paced the dock, offering rings of Cuban incense to the stars.

From the play house came the sounds which men make when they play cards and do not care whether they win or lose.

Maud was in her office, adding a column of figures which the grocer had sent in. The triplets, linked arm in arm, joined her. Arthur came, and Eve and Mary.

They agreed that they were very tired and ready for bed.

"It's going to be a success, anyway," said Mary. "That seems certain."

"We must have the plumber up," said Eve; "the laundry boiler has sprung a leak. Who's that in your pocket, Arthur?"

"Uncas. He came in exhausted after a long day in the woods. Something unusual happened to him. I know, because he tried so very hard to tell me all about it just before he went to sleep, and of course he couldn't quite make me understand. I think he was trying to warn me of something—trying to tell me to keep my eyes peeled."

The family laughed. Arthur was always so absurd about his pets. All laughed except Gay. She, in a dark corner, like the rose in the poem, blushed unseen.

XI

WHEN their week was up, Mr. Langham's guests, Messrs. O'Malley, Ashton, and Cox, felt obliged to go where income called them. Renier, however, who had only been at work a year, decided that he did not like his job and would try for another in the fall. Lee delivered herself of the stern opinion that a rolling stone gathers no moss, and Renier answered that his late uncle had been a fair-to-middling moss-gatherer, and that to have more than one such in a given family was a sign of low tastes. "I have a little money of my own," he said darkly, "and, what's more, I have a little hunch." To his face Lee upbraided him for his lack of ambition and his lack of elegance, but behind his back she smiled secretly. She was well pleased with herself. It had only taken him three days to get so that he knew her when he saw her, and for a young man of average intellect and eyesight, that was almost a record.

The triplets were not only as alike as three lovely vases cast in the same mold but it amused them to dress alike, without so much as the differentiation of a ribbon, and to imitate each other's little tricks of speech and gesture. It was even possible for them to fool their own brother at times when he happened to be a little absent-minded.

Every day Renier fished for many hours, and always the guide who handled his boat and showed him where to throw his flies was Lee.

"They're only children," said Mary, "and I think they're getting altogether too chummy."

Arthur did not answer, and for the very good reason that Mary's words were not addressed to him, nor were they addressed to Maud or Eve. Indeed, at the moment, these three were sound asleep in their beds. It was to that plumper and earlier bird, Mr. Samuel Langham, that Mary had spoken. The end of a kitchen table, set with blue-and-white dishes and cups that steamed, fragrantly separated them. They had formed a habit of breakfasting together in the kitchen, and it had not taken Mary long to discover that Sam Langham's good judgment was not confined to eatables and drinkables. She consulted him about all sorts of things. She felt as if she had known him (and trusted him) all her life.

"Renier," he said, "is one of the few really eligible young men I know. That is why I asked him up here. I don't mean that my intention was match-making, but when I saw your picture in the advertisement, I said to myself: 'The Inn is no place for attractive scallawags. Any man that goes there on my invitation must be sound, morally and financially.' Young Renier is as innocent of evil as Miss Lee herself. If they take a fancy to each other—of course it's none of my business, but, my dear Miss Darling, why not?"

"Coffee?"

"Thanks."

"An egg?"

"Please."

Mary was very tactful. She never said, "Some more coffee?" She never said, "Another egg?"

"Some people," said Mr. Langham, smiling happily, "might say that *we* were getting too chummy."

"Suppose," said Mary, "that somebody did say just that?"

"I should reply," said Mr. Langham thoughtfully, "that of the few really eligible men that I know, I myself am, on the whole, the most eligible."

Mary laughed. "Construe," she said.

"In the first place," he continued, "and naming my qualifications in the order of their importance, I don't ever remember to have spoken a cross word to anybody; secondly, unless I have paved a primrose path to ultimate indigestion and gout, there is nothing in my past life to warrant mention. To be more explicit, I am not in a position to be troubled by—er—'old agitations of myrtle and roses'; third,

something tells me that in a time of supreme need, it would be possible for me to go to work, and, fourth, I have plenty of money—really plenty of money."

Mary smiled, almost tenderly.

"I can't help feeling," she said, "that I, too, am a safe proposition. I am twenty-nine. My wild oats have never sprouted. I think we may conclude that they were never sown. The Inn was my idea—mostly, though I say it that shouldn't. And The Inn is going to be a success. We could fill every room we've got five times—at our own prices."

"I pronounce your bill of health sound," said Mr. Langham. "Let us continue to be chummy."

"Coffee?"

"Thanks."

Whatever chance there may have been for Gay and Pritchard to get "too chummy"—and no one will deny that they had made an excellent start—was promptly knocked in the head by Arthur. It so happened that, in a desperately unguarded moment, when Arthur happened to be present, Pritchard mentioned that he had spent a whole winter in the city of Peking. The name startled Arthur as might the apparition of a ghost.

"Which winter?" he asked. "I mean, what year?"

Pritchard said what year, and added, "Why do you ask?"

Arthur had not meant to ask. He began a long blush, seeing which, Gay turned swift heels and escaped upon a suddenly ejaculated pretext.

"Why," said Arthur lamely. "I knew some people who were in Peking that winter—that's all."

"Then," said Pritchard, "we have mutual friends. I knew every foreigner in Peking. There weren't many."

Although Arthur had gotten the better of his blush, he felt that Pritchard was eyeing him rather narrowly.

"They," said Arthur, "were a Mr. and Mrs. Waring."

"I hope," said Pritchard, "that *he* wasn't a friend of yours."

"He was not," said Arthur, "but she was. I was very fond of her."

"Nobody," said Pritchard, "could help being fond of her. But Waring was an old brute. One hated him. He wouldn't let her call her soul her own. He was

always snubbing her. We used to call her the 'girl with the dry eyes.'"

"Why?" asked Arthur.

"It's a Chinese idea," said Pritchard. "Every woman is supposed to have just so many tears to shed. When these are all gone, why, then, no matter what sorrows come to her, she has no way of relieving them."

Arthur could not conceal his agitation. And Pritchard looked away. He wished to escape. He thought that he could be happier with Gay than with her brother. But Arthur, agitation or no agitation, was determined to find out all that the young Englishman could tell him about the Waringings. He began to ask innumerable questions. "How do Christians amuse themselves in the Chinese capital?" "Did Mrs. Waring ride?" "What were some of her friends like?" And so forth. There was no escaping him. He fastened himself to Pritchard as a drowning man to a straw. And his appetite for Peking news became insatiable. Pritchard surrendered gracefully. He went with Arthur on canoe trips and mountain climbs; at night he smoked with him in the open camp. And, in the end, Arthur gave him his whole confidence; so that, much as Pritchard wished to climb mountains and go canoeing with Gay, he was touched, interested, and gratified, and then he found himself liking Arthur as much as any man he had ever known.

"There is something wonderfully fine about your brother," he said to Gay. "At first, I thought he was a queer stick, with his pets and his secret haunts in the woods, and his unutterable contempt for anything mean or worldly. We ought to dress him up in proof armor and send him forth upon the quest of some grail or other."

"Grails," said Gay, "and rooks are extinct."

"Grails extinct!" exclaimed Pritchard. He was horrified. "Why, my dear Miss Gay, if ever the world offered opportunities to belted knights without fear and without reproach, it's now."

"I suppose," said she, "that Arthur has told you all about his—his mix-up."

Pritchard nodded gravely.

"Is that the quest he ought to ride on?"

"No—it won't do for Arthur. He might be accused of self-interest. That should be a matter to be redressed by a brother knight."

"Or a divorce court."

"Miss Gay!"

"I don't think it's nice for one's brother to be in love with a married woman."

"It isn't," said Pritchard gravely, "for him. It's hell."

"We," said Gay, "never knew her."

"She's not much older than you," said Pritchard. "If I'd never seen you, I'd say that she was the prettiest girl I'd ever seen. But she's gentler and meeker than even you'd be in her boots. She isn't self-reliant and able."

"You talk as if you'd been in love with her yourself."

"I? I thought I was talking as if I were in love with you."

"Looks like it, doesn't it," said she. "Spending all your time with a girl's brother."

"Not doing what you most want to do," said Pritchard, "is sometimes thought knightly."

"Do you know," she said critically, "sometimes I think you really like me a lot. And sometimes I think that I really like you. The funny thing is that it never seems to happen to both of us at the same time. There's Arthur looking for you. Do me a favor—shake him and come for a tramp with me."

"I can't," said Pritchard simply. "I've promised. But to-morrow—"

"Certainly not," said she.

XII

WARM weather and the real opening of the season arrived at the same time. The Camp hummed with the activities and the voices of people.

Langham, Renier, and the future Earl of Merrivale remained, of course, upon their well-established footing of companionship, but the Darlings began to play their parts of innkeepers with the utmost seriousness and to fight shy of any social advances from the ranks of their guests.

Indeed, for the real heads of the family, Mary, Maud, and Eve, there was serious work to be done, for, to keep thirty or forty exigent and extravagant people well fed, well laundered, well served, and well amused, is no frisky skirmish but a morning-to-night battle, a constant looking-ahead, a steady drain upon the patience and invention.

In Sam Langham, Mary found an invaluable ally. He knew how to live, and could guess to a nicety the "inner man" of another. Nor did he stop at advice. Being a celebrated *bon viveur*, he went subtly among the guests and praised the machinery of whose completed product they were the consumers and the beneficiaries. He knew of no place, he confided, up and down the whole world, where, for a sum of money, you got exactly what you wanted without asking for it.

"Take me for an example," he would say. "I have never before been able to get along without my valet. Here he would be a superfluity. I am 'done,' you may say, better than I have ever been able to do myself. And I know what I'm talking about. What! You think the prices are really rather high. Think what you are getting, man—think!"

Among the new guests was a young man from Boston by the name of Sydney Herring. He had written that he was convalescing from typhoid fever and that his doctor had prescribed Adirondack air.

Renier knew Herring slightly and vouched for him. "They're good people," he said, "his branch of the Herring family—the 'red Herrings' they are called locally—if we may speak of Boston as a 'locality'—he's the reddest of them and the most showy. If there's anything he hasn't tried, he has to try it. He isn't good at things. But he does them. He's the fellow that went to the Barren Lands with a niblick. What, you never heard of that stunt? He was playing in a foursome at Myopia. He got bunkered. He hit the sand a prodigious blow and the ball never moved. His partner said, 'Never mind, Syd, you hit hard enough to kill a musk-ox.'

"Did I?" said Herring, much interested, "but I never heard of killing a musk-ox with a niblick. Has it ever been done?"

"His partner assured him that 'it' had never been done. Herring said that was enough for him. The charm of Herring is that he never smiles; he's deadly serious—or pretends to be. When they had holed out at the eighteenth, Herring took his niblick and said: 'Well, so long! I'm off to the Barren Lands.'

"They bet him, there and then, that he would neither go to the Barren Lands nor kill a musk-ox when he got there. He took their bets, which were large. And he went

to the Barren Lands, armed only with his niblick and a camera. But he didn't kill a musk-ox. He said they came right up to be photographed, and he hadn't the heart to strike. He brought back plenty enough pictures to prove where he'd been, but no musk-ox. He aimed at one tentatively, but at the last moment held his hand. He remembered suddenly, he said, 'that he had never killed anything, and didn't purpose to begin. So he came home and paid one bet and pocketed the other. He can't shoot; he can't fish; he can't row. He's a perfect dub, but he's got the soul of a Columbus.'

"Something tells me," said Pritchard, "that I shall like him."

Herring, having arrived and registered and been shown his rooms, was not thereafter seen to speak to anybody for two whole days. As a matter of fact, though, he held some conversation with Renier, whom he had met before.

"It's just Boston," Renier explained. "They're the best people in the world—when—well, not when you get to know them but when they get to know you. Give him time and he will blossom."

"He looks like a blossom already," said Lee. "He looks at a little distance like a gigantic plant of scarlet salvia or a small maple tree in October."

Upon the third day, Mr. Herring came out of his shell, as had been prophesied. He went about asking guests and guides, with almost plaintive seriousness, questions which they were unable to answer. He began to make friends with Pritchard and Langham. He solemnly presented Arthur with a baseball that had figured in a Yale-Harvard game. Then he got himself introduced to Lee.

"You guide, don't you?" he said.

"I have guided," she said, "but I don't. It was only in the beginning of things, when there weren't enough real guides to go around. But surely you don't need a guide. You've been to the Barren Lands and all sorts of wild places. You ought to be a first-class woodsman."

"I thought I'd like to go fishing tomorrow," he said. "It's very disappointing. I've looked forward all my life to being guided by a young girl, and, when I saw you, I said, 'If this isn't she, this is her living image.'"

"You shall have Bullard," said Lee. "He knows all the best places."



DRAWN BY HOWARD CHANDLER CHRISTY

Herring complained to Arthur. "Your sisters," he said, "are said to be the best guides in the Adirondacks, but they won't take me out. How is a fellow to convalesce from typhoid if people aren't unfailingly kind to him?"

Arthur laughed, and said that he didn't know. "Let me guide you," he offered.

"No," said Herring; "it isn't that I want

Phyllis squeaked like a mouse, threw her weight to one

to be guided. It's that I want the experience of being guided by a girl. I want to lean back and be rowed."

Herring walked in the woods and came upon Phyllis's garden, with Phyllis in the midst of it.

"Hello again!" he said.

Now, it so happened that he had never seen Phyllis before. She straightened from

a frame of baby lettuce and smiled. She loved bright colors, and his flaming hair was becoming to her garden.

"Hello again!" she said.

"Have you changed your mind?" he asked.

She sparred for time and enlightenment and said, "It's against all the rules."

"We could," said he, "start so early that nobody would know. I have often gotten up at five."

"So have I," said Phyllis wistfully.



side, and the boat quietly upset

"We could be back before breakfast." Phyllis appeared to think the matter over.

"Of course," he said, "you said, you wouldn't. But if girls didn't change their minds, they wouldn't be girls."

"That," said Phyllis, "is perfectly true."

To herself she said, "He's asked Lee or Gay to guide him, and thinks he's asked me."

Now, Phyllis was not good with oars or fishing-tackle, but she liked Herring's hair and the fact that he never smiled. Furthermore, she believed that, if the worst came to the worst, she could find some of the places where people sometimes took trout.

"I have never," said Herring, "been guided by a young girl."

"What, never!" exclaimed Phyllis.

"Never," he said. "And I am sure that it would work wonders for me."

"Such as?"

"It might lead me to take an interest in gardening. I have always hoped that I should, some day."

"People," thought Phyllis, "interested in gardening are rare—especially beautiful young gentlemen with flaming hair.

Here is my chance to slaughter two birds with one stone."

"You'll swear not to tell?" she exhorted.

"Yes," he said, "but not here. Soon—when I am alone." He did not smile.

"Then," she said, "be at the float at five-thirty sharp."

That night she sought out Lee and Gay.

"Such a joke," she said. "I've promised to guide Mr. Herring—to-morrow at five-thirty, but he thinks that it's one of you two who have promised. Now, as I don't row or fish, one of you will have to take my place for the credit of the family."

But her sisters were laughing in their sleeves.

"My dear girl," said Gay, "why the dickens didn't you tell us sooner? We also have made positive engagements at five-thirty to-morrow morning."

"What engagements?" exclaimed Phyllis.

Gay leaned close and whispered confidentially. "We've made positive engagements," she said, "to sleep till breakfast-time."

XIII

IN an athletic generation, Phyllis was an anachronism. She was the sort of girl one's great-grandmother was, only better-looking

The Seven Darlings

—one's great-grandmother, if there is any truth in oil and canvas, having been neatly and roundly turned out of a peg of wood. Phyllis played no game well, unless gardening is a game. She liked to embroider, and to write long letters in a wonderfully neat hand. She disliked intensely the roaring of firearms and the diabolic flopping of fresh-caught fish. She was one of those people who never look at a sunset or a moonrise or a flower without actually seeing them, and yet, withal, her sisters Lee and Gay looked upon her with a certain awe and respect. She was so strong in the wrists and fingers that she could hold them when they were rambunctious. And she was only afraid of things that aren't in the least dangerous. "No," they said, "she can't fish and shoot and row and play tennis and dive and swim under water, but she's the best dancer in the family—probably in the world—and the best sport."

Phyllis was, in truth, a good sport, or else she was more attracted by Mr. Herring's *Salvia-splendens* hair than she would have cared to admit. Whatever the cause, she met him at the float the next morning at five-thirty, prepared to guide him or perish in the attempt. She wore a short blue skirt and a long white sweater of Shetland wool. It weighed about an ounce. She wore white tennis-shoes and an immense pair of well-oiled gardening-gloves. At least she would put off blistering her hands as long as possible.

Phyllis, to be exact, was five minutes early for her appointment. This gave her time to get a boat into the water without displaying awkwardness to anyone but herself—also, to slip the oars over the tholepins and to accustom herself to the idea of handling them. She had taken coaching the night before from Lee and Gay, sitting on a bearskin rug in front of the fire, and swaying rhythmically forward and back.

As Herring was no fisherman, her sisters advised her to row very slowly. "Tell him," they said, "that a boat rushing through water alarms fish more than anything in the world."

She told him when he was seated in the stern of the boat facing her.

"You mustn't mind going very slow," she said. "The fish in this part of the Adirondacks are noted for their sensitiveness in general and their acute sense of hearing in particular. Why, if I were to

row as fast as I can"—there must have been a twinkle in her eyes—"trout miles away would be frightened out of their skins," and she added mentally, "and I should upset this horribly wobbly boat into the bargain."

They proceeded at a snail's pace, Phyllis dabbling the water gingerly with her oars, with something of that caution and repulsion with which one turns over a dead snake with a stick—to see if it is dead.

The grips of guide-boat oars overlap. And your hands follow rather than accompany each other from catch to finish, and from finish to catch. If you are careless, or not to the stroke born or trained, you occasionally knock little chunks of skin and flesh from your knuckles.

Herring watched Phyllis's gentle and restrained efforts with inscrutable eyes.

"I never could understand," he said, "how you fellows manage to row at all with that sort of an outfit. At Harvard they only give you one oar and let you take both hands to it, and then you can't row. At least, I couldn't. They put me right out of the boat. They said I caught crabs. As a matter of fact, I didn't. All I did was to sit there, and every now and then the handle of my oar banged me across the solar plexus."

"We're not going far, you know," said Phyllis, and she mastered the desire to laugh. "Hadn't you—ah—um—better put your rod together?"

"Oh, I can do that!" said Herring. "You begin with the big piece, and you stick the next-sized piece into that, and so on. And I know how to put the reel on, because the man in the store showed me, and I know how to run the line through the rings."

"Well," said Phyllis, "that's more than half the battle."

"And," Herring continued, "he showed me how to tie on the what-you-may-call-it and the flies."

"Good!" said Phyllis.

"And, of course," he concluded, "I've forgotten."

Now, Phyllis had been shown how to tie flies to a leader only the night before, and she, also, had forgotten.

"There are," she said, "a great many fetishes among anglers. Among them are knots. Now, in my experience, almost any knot that will stand will do. The important thing is to choose the right flies."

As to this, she had also received instruc-

tion, but with better results, since it was an entirely feminine affair of colored silks and feathers.

"I will tell you which flies to use," she said.

"And," said he, "you will also have to show me how to cast."

"What!" she exclaimed, and stopped rowing. "You don't know how to cast?"

"No," he said, "I don't. I'm a dub. Didn't you know that?"

"But," she protested, "I can't teach you in a morning"—and she added mentally, "or in a whole lifetime, for that matter."

It was not more than a mile across the mouth of a deep bay to the brook in which they had elected to fish. With no wind to object, the most dabbily propelled guide-boat travels with considerable speed, and before Herring had managed to tie the flies which Phyllis had selected to his leader (with any kind of a knot), they were among the snaggy shallows of the brook's mouth.

The brook was known locally as Swamp Brook, its shores for a mile or more being murky and treacherous. Fishermen who liked to land occasionally and cast from terra firma avoided it. Phyllis had selected it solely because it was the nearest brook to the camp which contained trout. If she had remembered how full it was of snags and how easily guide-boats are turned turtle, she would have selected some other brook, even, if necessary, at the "Back of Beyond." It had been easy enough to propel the boat across the open waters of the lake, but to guide it clear of snags and around right-angle bends, especially when the genius of rowing demands that eyes look astern rather than ahead, was beyond her powers. The boat ran into snags, poked its nose into murky banks, turned half over, righted, rushed on, and stopped again with rude bumps.

Herring, that fatalistic young Bostonian, began to take an interest in his fate. His flies trailed in the water behind him. His eyes never left Phyllis's face. His handsome mouth was as near to smiling as it ever got.

"Do you," he said presently, "swim as well as you row?"

She stopped rowing; she laughed right out. "Just about," she said.

"Good," he said seriously, "because I'm

a dub at it, and in case of an upset, I look to you."

"The truth," said Phyllis, "is that there's no place to swim to. It's all swamp in here."

"True," said Herring; "we would have to cling to the boat and call upon heaven to aid us."

One of Herring's flies, trailing in the water proved, at this moment, overwhelmingly attractive to a young and unsophisticated trout.

Herring shouted with the triumph of a schoolboy, "I've got one," and sprang to his feet.

"Please sit down!" said Phyllis. "We almost went that time."

"So we did," said Herring.

He sat down, and they almost "went" again.

"Now," said Phyllis, "play him."

"Play him?" said Herring. "Watch me." And he began to pull strongly upon the fish.

The fish was young and weak. Herring's tackle was new and strong. The fish dangled in mid-air over the middle of the boat.

"Sorry," said Herring; "I can't reach him. Take him off, please."

It has been said that Phyllis was a good sport. If there was one thing she hated and feared more than another, it was a live fish. She reached forward; her gloved hand almost closed upon it; it gave a convulsive flop; 'twixt leap and wriggle Phyllis squeaked like a mouse, threw her weight to one side, and the boat quietly upset.

The sportsmen came to the surface streaming.

"I can touch bottom," said Herring politely, "can you?"

"Yes," she said; "but my feet are sinking into it—" She tore them loose and swam. Herring did likewise. And they clung to the boat.

"I hope you'll forgive me," said Phyllis. "I never rowed a boat before and I never could stand live fish."

"It was my fault," said Herring. "Something told me to lean the opposite from the way you leaned. But it told me too late. The truth is, I don't know how to behave in a boat. Well, you are still guide. It's up to you."

"What is up to me?"

"A plan of some sort," said he, "to get us out of this."

"Oh, no," she said; "it's up to you."

"My plan," he said, "would be to get back into the boat and row home. It seems feasible and even easy. But appearances are deceptive. I think I'd rather walk. What has happened here might happen out on the middle of the lake."

"What you don't realize," said Phyllis, "is that we're in the midst of an impassable swamp."

"Impassable?"

"Well, no one's ever crossed it except in winter."

"What—no one!"

He was immensely interested.

"Do you know," he went on confidentially, "the only things that I'm good at are things for which there are no precedents—things that nobody has ever done before. That's why I'm so fond of doing unusual things. Now, you say that this swamp has never been crossed? Enough said. You and I will cross it. We *will* do it. Are you game?"

"It seems," said Phyllis, "merely a question of when and where we drown. So I'm game. Your teeth are chattering."

"Thank you," said Herring. "But no harm will come to them. They are very strong."

"I hope," said Phyllis, "that when I come out of the water you won't look at me. I shall be a sight."

"A comrade in trouble," said Herring, "is never a sight."

"I am so ashamed," said Phyllis.

"What of?"

"Of being such a fool."

"You're a good sport," said Herring. "That's what you are."

By dint of violent kicking and paddling with their free hands, they managed to propel the guide-boat from the center of the brook to a firm-looking clump of reeds and alder roots which formed a tiny peninsula from that shore which was toward The Camp. Covered with slime and mud, they dragged themselves out of the water and stood balancing upon the alder roots to recover their breath.

"We must each take an oar," said Herring. "We can make little bridges with them. And we must keep working hard so as to get warm. We shall live to write

a brochure about this: 'From Clump to Clump, or Mudfoots in the Adirondacks.'"

Between that clump on which they had found a footing and the next was ten feet of water. Herring crossed seven feet of it with one heavy jump, fell on his face, caught two handfuls of brush-stems and once more dragged himself out of water.

"Now then," he called; "float the oars over to me." And when Phyllis had done this: "Now you come. The main thing in crossing swamps is to keep flat instead of up and down. Jump for it—fall forward—and I'll get your hands!"

Once more they stood side by side, precariously balancing.

"The moment," said Herring, "that you begin to feel bored, tell me."

"Why?"

"So that I can encourage you. I will tell you that you are doing something that has never been done before. And that will make you feel fine and dandy. What we are doing is just as hard as finding the North Pole, only there isn't going to be so much of it. Now then, in negotiating this next sheet of water—"

And so they proceeded until the sun was high in the heavens and until it was low.

XIV

To attempt the dangerous passage of a swamp when they might have returned to camp in the guide-boat, was undoubtedly a most imbecile decision. And if Phyllis had not been thoroughly flustered by the upset which was all her fault, she never would have consented to it. As for Herring's voice in the matter, it was that which the young man always gave when there was a question of adventure. He didn't get around mountains by the valley road. He climbed over them. He had not in his whole being a suspicion of what is dangerous. He had never been afraid of anything. He probably never would be. He would have enjoyed leading half a dozen forlorn hopes every morning before breakfast.

"We were idiots," said Phyllis, "to leave the boat."

"We can't go back to it now," said Herring. "We don't know the way."

"Your voice sounds as if you were glad of it."

"I am. I was dreadfully afraid you'd



DRAWN BY HOWARD CHANDLER CHRISTY

Suddenly Gay reached the end of the long platform and stopped running. The train was now going quite fast for an Adirondack train. The distance between them widened rapidly.

"Wish you weren't going!" called Gay. And she saw Pritchard reach suddenly upward and pull the rope by which trains are stopped in emergencies

decide against crossing this swamp. I'd set my heart on it."

"It isn't I," said Phyllis, "that's against our crossing this swamp. It's the swamp."

"The main thing," said Herring, with satisfaction (physically he was almost exhausted), "is that here we are safe and sound. We don't know where 'here' is, but it's with us; it won't run away. When we've rested we shall go on, taking 'here' with us. Wherever we go is 'here.' Think of that!"

"I wish I could think of something else," said Phyllis, "but I can't. I'm almost dead."

"You are doing something that no girl has ever done before, not even your sisters, those princesses of fortune. Years from now, when you begin, 'Once when I happened to be crossing Brush Swamp with a young fellow named Herring,' they will have to sit silent and listen."

"If you weren't so cheerful," said Phyllis, "I should have begun to cry an hour ago. Do you really think this is fun?"

"Do I think it's fun? To be in a scrape—not to know when or how we are going to get out of it? You bet I think it's fun!"

"People have died," said Phyllis, "having just this sort of fun. Suppose we can't get out?"

"You mean to-day? Perhaps we can't. Perhaps not to-morrow. Perhaps we shall have to learn how to live in a swamp. A month of the life we've led for the last few hours might turn us into amphibians. That would be intensely novel and interesting. But, of course, when winter comes and the place freezes over, we can march right out and take up our orthodox lives where we left off. Listen!"

"What?"

"I think I hear webs growing between my fingers and toes."

Phyllis laughed so that the partially dried mud on her face cracked.

"What," she said, "are we going to eat this side of winter? What are we going to eat now?"

His face expressed immense concern.

"What? You are hungry? Allow me!"

He produced from his inside pocket a very large cake of sweet chocolate, wrapped in several thicknesses of oiled silk.

"My one contribution," he said, "to the science of woodcraft."

Phyllis ate and was refreshed. After-

ward, she washed all the mud from her face. Herring watched the progress of the ablution with much interest.

"Wonderful!" he said presently.

"What is wonderful?" she asked, not without anticipation of a compliment.

"Wonderful to find that something which is generally accepted as true—is true. To see it proved before your eyes."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," he said, "that I never before actually saw a girl wash her face. I've seen 'em when they said they were going to. I've seen 'em when they said they just had. But now I know."

"If you weren't quite mad," said Phyllis, "you'd be very exasperating. Here am I, frightened half to death, cold and miserable, and dreadfully worried to think how worried my family must be, and there are you, almost too tired to stand, actually delighted with yourself because you're in trouble and because for the first time in your life you've seen a girl wash her face. Can't you be serious about anything?"

"Not about a half-drowned girl taking the trouble to wash her face," he said.

"You," said she, "would look much better if you washed yours."

"But," he said, "we'll be covered with mud again before we've gone fifty yards."

"Because you are going into a coal mine to-morrow," said Phyllis, "is no reason why you shouldn't be clean to-day."

"True," said Herring, and he washed his face.

At breakfast that morning Pritchard received the following cablegram:

Come home and shake hands. I'm off. M.

Greatly moved, he carried it to Gay, and, without comment, put it in her hand.

"Who is M?" she asked.

"My uncle, the Earl of Merrivale."

"What does 'I'm off' mean?"

"It means," said Pritchard, "that they've given him up and he wants to make friends. He never liked my father, or me."

"It means," said Gay generously, "that you are going away."

"Yes," he said; "at once. But it means more. It means that I've got to find out if I'm—to come back sometime?"

"Of course you are to come back," she said.

Words rose swiftly to Pritchard's lips

and came no further. Indeed, he appeared to swallow them.

"And I'm glad you are going to make friends with your uncle," said Gay.

"There'll be such lots of young men here when the season opens," said Pritchard.

"Judging by applications," said Gay, "we shall be swamped with gentlemen of all ages."

Pritchard's melancholy only deepened. "Will you come as far as Carrytown in the Streak?" he asked.

She nodded, and said she would because she had some shopping to do.

During that short, exhilarating rush across the lake, and afterward walking up and down on the board platform by the side of the waiting train, he tried his best to wring a little sentiment out of her, but failed utterly.

The locomotive whistled, and the conductor came out of the village drug store, staggering slightly.

"I've left all my dry-fly tackle," said Pritchard. "Will you take care of it for me?"

"With pleasure," said Gay.

"I'd like you to use it. It's a lovely rod to throw line."

"All aboard!"

"I'd like to bring you out some rods and things. May I?"

"You bet you may!" exclaimed Gay.

Pritchard sighed. The train creaked, jolted, moved forward, stopped, jerked, and moved forward again. Pritchard waited until the rear steps of the rear car were about to pass.

"Good-by, Miss Gay!"

They shook hands primly, and Pritchard swung himself on to the moving train. Gay, walking rapidly and presently breaking into a trot, accompanied him as far as the end of the platform. She wanted to say something that would please him very much without encouraging him too much.

"Looks as if I was after you!" she said.

Pritchard's whole soul was in his eyes. And there was a large lump in his throat. Suddenly Gay reached the end of the long platform and stopped running. The train was now going quite fast for an Adirondack train. The distance between them widened rapidly.

"Wish you weren't going!" called Gay.

And she saw Pritchard reach suddenly upward and pull the rope by which trains

are stopped in emergencies. While the train was stopping and the train-hands were trying to find out who had stopped it and why, Pritchard calmly alighted and returned to where Gay was standing.

"I just had to look at you once more—close," he said. "You never can tell what will happen in this world. I may never see you again, and the thought is killing me. Think of that once in a while, please."

He bent swiftly, caught her hand in his, kissed it, and was gone. Or if not exactly gone, she saw him no more, because of suddenly blinding tears.

When she reached The Camp, Arthur was at the float to meet her.

"Phyllis and Herring haven't come back," he said. "Lee says they went fishing. Do you know where they went?"

"I don't. And they ought to have been back hours ago."

"Yes," said Arthur, "and we're all starting out to look for them. Care to come with me?"

"Yes," she said; "I've got to do something."

Something in her voice took his mind from the more imminent matter.

"What's wrong, Gay?"

She shook her head.

"Nothing. Let's start. If Phyl rowed, they must have gone to the nearest possible fishing-grounds."

At this moment, Sam Langham came puffing down from Cook House. He was dressed in white flannels and carried a revolver.

"It's to signal with," he explained. "I'm going to try Loon Brook, because it's the only brook I know when I see it."

"Bullard's gone to Loon Brook."

"Pshaw—can't I ever be of any use!"

"Good Lord," said Gay, "look!"

There came around the nearest bend a man rowing one guide-boat and towing another, which was empty. Arthur called to him in a loud, hoarse voice.

"Where'd you find that boat?"

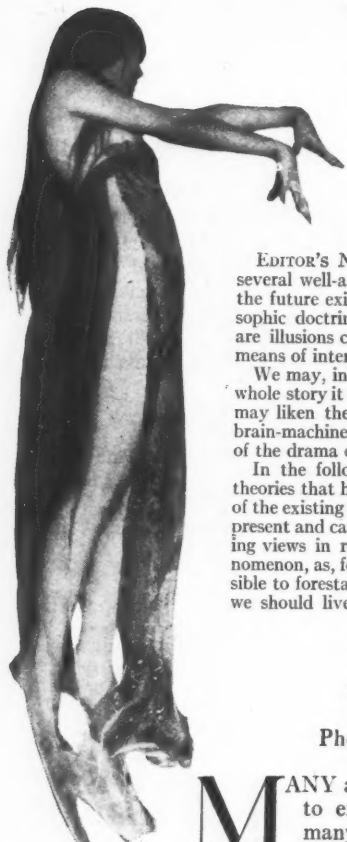
"Up Swamp Brook," came the answer.

Arthur and Gay went gray as ashes.

"Who's to tell Mary?" said Arthur presently. Then Sam Langham spoke.

"If you don't mind," he said, "I think I will."

An hour later, the entire male population of The Camp was dragging Swamp Brook for what they so dreaded to find.



The Unknown Guest

EDITOR'S NOTE—In the last issue of *Cosmopolitan*, M. Maeterlinck described several well-authenticated cases of psychic phenomena which seem to argue that the future exists exactly as do the present and the past, and to confirm the philosophic doctrine that the perceptions of "yesterday," "to-day," and "to-morrow" are illusions created by our own mental apparatus—an imperfect and misleading means of interpreting one undivided and eternal present.

We may, indeed, compare this eternal present to a moving-picture film. The whole story it tells—from beginning to end—is complete at any instant. And so we may liken the apparatus which reveals the "movie" play to an audience to the brain-machine which presents the eternal moment of existence to us as spectators of the drama of life in terms of the subjective functions of time and space.

In the following article, the same distinguished author explains the various theories that have been advanced to account for the occasional "leaking-through" of the existing future into a consciousness which normally has cognizance only of the present and can recall the past, and puts forward some original and highly interesting views in regard to questions that arise in connection with this strange phenomenon, as, for example, why premonitions are of tragic import; why it is impossible to forestall events by heeding such premonitions, and what kind of a world we should live in if premonitions were more frequent and we did heed them.

By Maurice Maeterlinck

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Photographic Decorations by Lejaren à Hiller

MANY are the theories which men have imagined in their attempts to explain the working of strange psychic phenomena; and many others might be imagined.

Self-suggestion and telepathy explain certain cases which concern events already in existence but still latent and perceived before the knowledge of them can reach us by the normal process of the senses or the intelligence. But, even by extending these two theories to their uttermost point and positively abusing their accommodating elasticity, we do not succeed in illumining, by their aid, more than a rather restricted portion of the vast, undiscovered land. We must therefore look for something else.

The first theory
which suggests



itself and one which, on the surface, seems rather attractive is that of spiritualism, which may be extended until it is scarcely distinguishable from the theosophical theory and other religious suppositions. It assumes the survival of spirits, the existence of discarnate or other superior and more mysterious entities, which surround us, interest themselves in our fate, guide our thoughts and our actions, and, above all, know the future. It is, as we recognize when speaking of ghosts and haunted houses, a very acceptable theory; and anyone to whom it appeals can adopt it without doing violence to his intelligence. But it starts by begging the question. Without the intervention of discarnate beings, the spiritualists say, it is impossible to explain the majority of the premonitory phenomena; therefore we must admit the existence of these discarnate beings. Let us grant it for the moment, for to beg the question, which is merely an indefensible trick of the superficial logic of our brain, does not necessarily condemn a theory, and neither takes away from nor adds to the reality of things. Besides, as we shall insist later, the intervention or non-intervention of the spirits is not the point at issue; and the crux of the mystery does not lie there. What must interest us is far less the paths or intermediaries by which prophetic warnings reach us than the actual existence of the future in the present.

POSITION OF SPIRITUALISM

It is true—to do complete justice to neospiritualism—that its position offers certain advantages from the point of view of the almost inconceivable problem of the preexistence of the future. It can evade or divert some of the consequences of that problem. The discarnate spirits, it declares, do not necessarily see the future as a whole, as a total past or present; motionless and immovable, but they know infinitely better than we do the numberless causes that determine any event, so that, finding themselves at the luminous source of those causes, they have no difficulty in foreseeing their effects. They are, with respect to the incidents still in process of formation, in the position of an astronomer who foretells, within a second, all the phases of an eclipse in which a savage sees nothing but an unprecedented catastrophe which he attributes to the anger of his idols of straw or clay. It is indeed possible that this ac-

quaintance with a greater number of causes explains certain predictions; but there are plenty of others which presume a knowledge of so many causes—causes so remote and so profound—that this knowledge is hardly to be distinguished from a knowledge of the future, pure and simple. In any case, beyond certain limits the preexistence of causes seems no clearer than that of effects. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the spiritualists gain a slight advantage here.

They believe that they gain another when they say, or might say, that it is still possible that discarnate spirits stimulate us to realize the events which they foretell without themselves clearly perceiving them in the future. After announcing, for instance, that on a certain day we shall go to a certain place and do a certain thing, they urge us irresistibly to proceed to the spot named and there to perform the act prophesied. But this theory, like those of self-suggestion and telepathy, would explain only a few phenomena and would leave in obscurity all those cases, infinitely more numerous because they make up almost the whole of our future, in which either chance intervenes or some event in no way dependent upon our will or the spirits', unless, indeed, we suppose that the latter possesses an omniscience and an omnipotence which take us back to the original mysteries of the problem.

NATURE OF PREMONITIONS

Besides, in the gloomy regions of precognition, it is almost always a matter of anticipating a misfortune and very rarely, if ever, of meeting with a pleasure or a joy. We should therefore have to admit that the spirits which drag me to the fatal place and compel me to do the act that will have tragic consequences, are deliberately hostile to me and find diversion only in the spectacle of my suffering. What could those spirits be, from what evil world would they arise, and how should we explain why our brothers and friends of yesterday, after passing through the august and peace-bestowing gates of death, suddenly become transformed into crafty and malevolent demons? Can the great spiritual kingdom in which all passions born of the flesh should be stilled, be but a dismal abode of hatred, spite, and envy? It will perhaps be said that they lead us into misfortune in order

to purify us; but this brings us to religious theories, which it is not our intention to examine.

The only attempt at an explanation that can hold its own with spiritualism has recourse once again to the mysterious powers of our subconsciousness. We must needs recognize that, if the future exists to-day, already such as it will be when it becomes for us the present and the past, the intervention of discarnate minds or of any other spiritual entity adrift from another sphere is of little avail. We can picture an infinite spirit indifferently contemplating the past and future in their coexistence, and imagine a whole hierarchy of intermediate intelligences taking a more or less extensive part in the contemplation and transmitting it to our subconsciousness. But all this is practically nothing more than inconsistent speculation and ingenious dreaming in the dark.

THE UNKNOWN GUEST

Let us keep to the facts as we see them. An unknown faculty, buried deep in our being and generally inactive, perceives, on rare occasions, events that have not yet taken place. We possess but one certainty on this subject, namely, that the phenomenon actually occurs within ourselves; it is, therefore, within ourselves that we must first study it, without burdening ourselves with suppositions which remove it from its center and simply shift the mystery. The incomprehensible mystery is the preexistence of the future; once we admit this—and it seems very difficult to deny—there is no reason to attribute to imaginary intermediaries rather than to ourselves the faculty of descrying certain fragments of that future. We see, in regard to most of the mediumistic manifestations, that we possess within ourselves all the unusual forces with which the spiritualists endow discarnate spirits; and why should it be otherwise as concerns the powers of divination? The explanation taken from the subconsciousness is the most direct, the simplest, the nearest, whereas the other is endlessly circuitous, complicated, and distant. Until the spirits testify to their existence in an unanswerable fashion, there is no advantage in seeking in the grave for the solution of a riddle that appears to lie at the roots of our own life.

It is true that this explanation does not

explain much; but the others are just as ineffectual and are open to the same objections. These objections are many and various, and it is easier to raise them than to reply to them. For instance, we can ask ourselves why the subconsciousness or the spirits, seeing that they read the future and are able to announce an impending calamity, hardly ever give us the one useful and definite indication that would allow us to avoid it. What can be the childish or mysterious reason of this strange reticence?

WHAT THE SPIRITS KEEP BACK

In many cases it is almost criminal. For instance, in a case related by Professor Hyslop we see the foreboding of the greatest misfortune that can befall a mother germinating, growing, sending out shoots, developing, like some gluttonous and deadly plant, to stop short on the verge of the last warning, the one detail, insignificant in itself but indispensable, which would have saved the child. It is the case of a woman who begins by experiencing a vague but powerful impression that a grievous "burden" was going to fall upon her family. Next month, this premonitory feeling repeats itself very frequently, becomes more intense, and ends by concentrating itself upon the poor woman's little daughter. Each time that she is planning something for the child's future, she hears a voice saying, "She'll never need it."

A week before the catastrophe, a violent smell of fire fills the house. From that time, the mother begins to be careful about matches, seeing that they are in safe places and out of reach. She looks all over the house for them and feels a strong impulse to burn all matches of the kind easily lighted. About an hour before the fatal disaster, she reaches for a box to destroy it; but she says to herself that her eldest boy is gone out, thinks that she may need the matches to light the gas-stove, and decides to destroy them as soon as he comes back. She takes the child up to its crib for its morning sleep, and, as she is putting it into the cradle, she hears the usual mysterious voice whisper in her ear, "Turn the mattress."

But, being in a great hurry, she simply says that she will turn the mattress after the child has taken its nap. She then goes down-stairs to work. After a while, she hears the child cry and, hurrying up to the

room, finds the crib and its bedding on fire, and the child so badly burned that it dies in three hours.

Before going further and theorizing about this case, let us once more state the matter precisely. I know that the reader may straightway and quite legitimately deny the value of anecdotes of this kind. He will say that we have to do with a neurotic who has drawn upon her imagination for all the elements that give a dramatic setting to the story and surround with a halo of mystery a sad but commonplace domestic accident. This is quite possible; and it is perfectly allowable to dismiss the case. But it is none the less true that, by thus deliberately rejecting everything that does not bear the stamp of mathematical or judicial certainty, we risk losing, as we go along, most of the opportunities or clues which the great riddle of this world offers us in its moments of inattention or graciousness. At the beginning of an inquiry we must know how to content ourselves with little. For the incident in question to be convincing, previous evidence in writing—more or less official statements—would be required, whereas we have only the declarations of the husband, a neighbor, and a sister. This is insufficient, I agree; but we must, at the same time, confess that the circumstances are hardly favorable to obtaining the proofs which we demand. Those who receive warnings of this kind either believe in them or do not believe in them. If they believe in them, it is quite natural that they should not think, first of all, of the scientific interest of their trouble, or of putting down in writing and thus authenticating its premonitory symptoms and gradual evolution. If they do not believe in them, it is no less natural that they should not proceed to speak or take notes of inanities of which they do not recognize the value until after they have lost the opportunity of supplying convincing proofs of them.

A PERTURBING PROBLEM

Having said this much, in order to conciliate or part company with those who have no intention of leaving the terra firma of science, let us return to the case before us, which is all the more disquieting inasmuch as we may consider it a sort of prototype of the tragic and almost diabolical omissions which we find in most premonitions.

It is probable that under the mattress there was a stray match which the child discovered and struck; this is the only possible explanation of the catastrophe, for there was no fire burning on that floor of the house. If the mother had turned the mattress, she would have seen the match; and, on the other hand, she would certainly have turned the mattress if she had been told that there was a match underneath it. Why did the voice that urged her to perform the necessary action not add the one word that was capable of insuring that action? The problem, moreover, is equally perturbing and perhaps equally insoluble whether it concerns our own subconscious faculties or spirits or strange intelligences. Those who give these warnings must know that they will be useless, because they manifestly foresee the event as a whole; but they must also know that one last word, which they do not pronounce, would be enough to prevent the misfortune that is already consummated in their prevision. They know it so well that they bring this word to the very edge of the abyss, hold it suspended there, almost drop it down, and recapture it suddenly at the moment when its weight would have caused happiness and life to rise once more to the surface of the mighty gulf.

WHAT IS THE MYSTERY?

What, then, is this mystery? Is it incapacity or hostility? If they are incapable, what is the unexpected and sovereign force that interposes between them and us? And if they are hostile, on what, on whom are they revenging themselves? What can be the secret of those inhuman games, of those uncanny and cruel diversions on the most slippery and dangerous peaks of fate? Why warn, if they know that the warning will be in vain? Of whom are they making sport? Is there really an inflexible fatality, by virtue of which that which has to be accomplished is accomplished from all eternity? But then, why not respect silence, since all speech is useless? Or do they, in spite of all, perceive a gleam, a crevice in the inexorable wall? What hope do they find in it? Have they not seen more clearly than ourselves that no deliverance can come through that crevice? One could understand this fluttering and wavering, all these efforts of theirs, if they did not know; but

here it is proved that they know everything, since they foretell exactly that which they might prevent. If we press them with questions, they answer that there is nothing to be done, that no human power could avert or thwart the issue. Are they mad, bored, irritable, or accessory to a hideous pleasantry? Does our fate depend on the happy solution of some petty enigma or childish conundrum, even as our salvation in most of the so-called revealed religions is settled by a blind and stupid toss-up? Is all the liberty that we are granted reduced to the reading of a more or less ingenious riddle? Can the great soul of the universe be the soul of a great baby?

But, rather than pursue this subject, let us be just and admit that there is perhaps no way out of the maze and that our reproaches are as incomprehensible as the conduct of the spirits. Indeed, what would you have them do in the circle in which our logic imprisons them? Either they foretell us a calamity which their predictions cannot avert, in which case there is no use in foretelling it, or, if they announce it to us and at the same time give us the means to prevent it, they do not really see the future and are foretelling nothing, since the calamity is not to take place, and their action seems equally absurd in both cases.

THE DILEMMA

It is obvious that, to whichever side we turn, we find nothing but the incomprehensible. On the one hand, the preestablished, unshakable, unalterable future, which we have called destiny, fatality, or what you will, which suppresses man's entire independence and liberty of action, and which is the most inconceivable and the dreariest of mysteries; on the other, intelligences apparently superior to our own, since they know what we do not, which, while aware that their intervention is always useless and very often cruel, nevertheless come harassing us with their sinister and ridiculous predictions. Must we resign ourselves once more to living with our eyes shut and our reason drowned in the boundless ocean of darkness; and is there no outlet?

For the moment we will not linger in the dark regions of fatality, which is the supreme mystery, the desolation of every effort and every thought of man. What is clearest amid this incomprehensibility is that the

spiritualistic theory, at first sight the most seductive, declares itself, on examination, the most difficult to justify. We will also once more put aside the theosophical theory or any other which assumes a divine intention and which might, to a certain extent, explain the hesitations and anguish of the prophetic warnings, at the cost, however, of other puzzles a thousand times as hard to solve, which nothing authorizes us to substitute for the actual puzzle, formless and infinite, presented to our uninitiated vision.

A POSSIBLE EXPLANATION

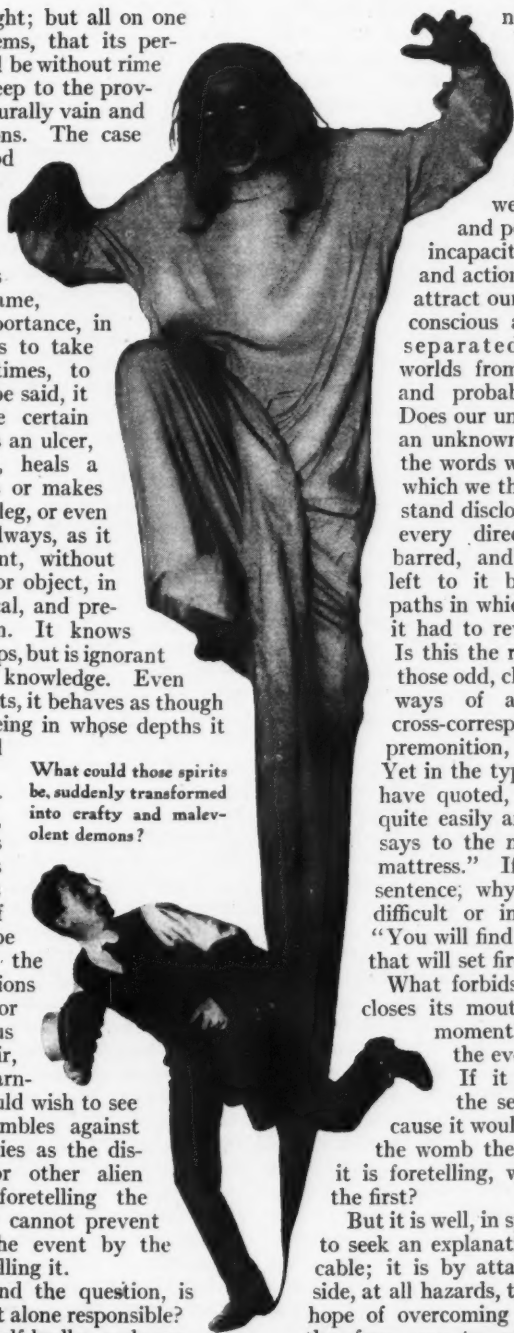
When all is said, it is perhaps only in the theory which attributes those premonitions to our subconsciousness that we are able to find, if not a justification, at least a sort of explanation of those formidable reservations. They accord fairly well with the strange, inconsistent, whimsical, and disconcerting character of the unknown guest within us that seems to live on naught but nondescript fare borrowed from worlds to which our intelligence as yet has no access. It lives under our reason, in a sort of invisible and perhaps eternal palace, like a casual guest dropped from another planet, whose interests, ideas, habits, passions have naught in common with ours. If it seems to have notions on the hereafter that are infinitely wider and more precise than those which we possess, it has only very vague notions on the practical needs of our existence. It ignores us for years, absorbed, no doubt, with the numberless relations which it maintains with all the mysteries of the universe; and, when suddenly it remembers us, thinking apparently to please us, it makes an enormous, miraculous, but at the same time clumsy and superfluous movement, which upsets all that we believed we knew, without teaching us anything. Is it making fun of us; is it jesting; is it amusing itself; is it facetious, teasing, arch, or simply sleepy, bewildered, inconsistent, absent-minded? In any case, it is rather remarkable that it evidently dislikes to make itself useful. It readily performs the most glamorous feats of sleight of hand, provided that we can derive no profit from them. It lifts up tables, moves the heaviest articles, produces flowers and hair, sets strings vibrating, gives life to inanimate objects, and passes through solid matter, conjures up ghosts, subjugates time and

space, creates light; but all on one condition, it seems, that its performances should be without rime or reason and keep to the province of supernaturally vain and puerile recreations. The case of the divining-rod is almost the only one in which it lends us any regular assistance, this being a sort of game, of no great importance, in which it appears to take pleasure. Sometimes, to say all that can be said, it consents to cure certain ailments, cleanses an ulcer, closes a wound, heals a lung, strengthens or makes supple an arm or leg, or even sets bones, but always, as it were, by accident, without reason, method, or object, in a deceitful, illogical, and preposterous fashion. It knows everything, perhaps, but is ignorant of the uses of its knowledge. Even at its best moments, it behaves as though the fate of the being in whose depths it dwells interested it hardly at all.

It is not surprising, therefore, when we know its habits, that its communications on the subject of the future should be as fantastic as the other manifestations of its knowledge or its power. Let us add, to be quite fair, that, in those warnings which we would wish to see efficacious, it stumbles against the same difficulties as the incarnate spirits or other alien minds uselessly foretelling the event which they cannot prevent or annihilating the event by the very fact of foretelling it.

And, now to end the question, is our unknown guest alone responsible? Does it explain itself badly, or do we

What could those spirits be, suddenly transformed into crafty and malevolent demons?



not understand it?

When we look into the matter closely, there is, under those anomalous and confused manifestations, in spite of efforts which we feel to be enormous and persevering, a sort of incapacity for self-expression and action which is bound to attract our attention. Is our conscious and individual life separated by impenetrable worlds from our subconscious and probably universal life? Does our unknown guest speak an unknown language, and do the words which it speaks and which we think that we understand disclose its thought? Is every direct road pitilessly barred, and is there nothing left to it but narrow, closed paths in which the best of what it had to reveal to us is lost? Is this the reason why it seeks those odd, childish, roundabout ways of automatic writing, cross-correspondence, symbolic premonition, and all the rest? Yet in the typical case which we have quoted, it seems to speak quite easily and plainly when it says to the mother, "Turn the mattress." If it can utter this sentence, why should it find it difficult or impossible to add, "You will find the matches there that will set fire to the curtains."

What forbids it to do so and closes its mouth at the decisive moment? We relapse into the everlasting question: If it cannot complete the second sentence because it would be destroying in the womb the very event which it is foretelling, why does it utter the first?

But it is well, in spite of everything, to seek an explanation of the inexplicable; it is by attacking it on every side, at all hazards, that we cherish the hope of overcoming it; and we may, therefore, say to ourselves that our

subconsciousness, when it warns us of a calamity that is about to fall upon us, knowing all the future as it does, necessarily knows that the calamity is already accomplished. As our conscious and unconscious lives blend in it, it distresses itself and flutters around our overconfident ignorance. It tries to inform us through nervousness, through pity, so as to mitigate the lightning cruelty of the blow. It speaks all the words that can prepare us for its coming, define it, and identify it; but it is unable to say those which would prevent it from coming, seeing that it has come, that it is already present and perhaps past, manifest, ineffaceable, on another plane than that on which we live, the only plane which we are capable of perceiving. It finds itself, in a word, in the position of the man who, in the midst of peaceful, happy, and unsuspecting folk, alone knows some bad news. He is neither able nor willing to announce it nor yet to hide it completely. He hesitates, delays, makes more or less transparent allusions, but does not either say the last word that would, so to speak, let loose the catastrophe in the hearts of the people around him, for to those who do not know of it the catastrophe is still as though it were not there. Our subconsciousness, in that case, would act toward the future as we act toward the past, the two conditions being identical, so much so that it often confuses them. It is, of course, impossible for us, at the stage which we have reached, to understand this confusion or this coexistence of the past, the present, and the future; but that is no reason for denying it—far from it.

ABNORMAL PERCEPTIONS

Lastly, to complicate the question, it may be very justly objected that, though premonitions in general are useless and appear systematically to withhold the only indispensable and decisive words, there are, nevertheless, some that often seem to save those who obey them. These, it is true, are rarer than the first, but still they include a certain number that are well authenticated. It remains to be seen how far they imply a knowledge of the future.

Here, for instance, is a traveler who, arriving at night in a small, unknown town and walking along the ill-lighted dock in the direction of a hotel of which he roughly knows the position, at a given moment feels

an irresistible impulse to turn and go the other way. He instantly obeys, though his reason protests and "berates him for a fool" in taking a roundabout way to his destination. The next day he discovers that, if he had gone a few feet farther, he would certainly have slipped into the river, and, as he was but a feeble swimmer, he would just as certainly, being alone and unaided in the extreme darkness, have been drowned.

But is this a prevision of an event? No; for no event is to take place. There is simply an abnormal perception of the proximity of some unknown water and consequently of an imminent danger, an unexplained but fairly frequent subliminal sensitiveness. In a word, the problem of the future is not raised in this case, or in any of the numerous cases that resemble it.

SOME OTHER CASES

Here is another, which evidently belongs to the same class, though, at first sight, it seems to postulate the preexistence of a fatal event and a vision of the future corresponding exactly with a vision of the past. A traveler in South America is descending a river in a canoe; his party is just about to run close to a promontory, when a sort of mysterious voice, which he has already heard at different momentous times of his life, imperiously orders him immediately to cross the river and gain the other shore as quickly as possible. This appears so absurd that he is obliged to threaten the Indians with death to force them to take this course. They have scarcely crossed more than half the river when the promontory falls at the very place where they meant to round it.

The perception of imminent danger is here, I admit, even more abnormal than in the previous example, but it comes under the same heading. It is a phenomenon of subliminal hypersensitiveness observed more than once, a sort of premonition induced by subconscious perceptions, which has been christened by the barbarous name of "cryptesthesia." But the interval between the moment when the peril is signaled and that at which it is consummated is too short for those questions which relate to a knowledge or a preexistence of the future to arise in this instance.

A third and rather more complicated case is that of Jean Dupré, the sculptor, who was driving alone with his wife along a mountain

road, skirting a perpendicular cliff. Suddenly they both heard a voice that seemed to come from the mountain crying, "Stop!"

They turned round, saw nobody, and continued on their road. But the cries were repeated again and again, without anything to reveal the presence of a human being amid the solitude. At last the sculptor alighted and saw that the left wheel of the carriage, which was grazing the edge of the precipice, had lost its linchpin and was on the point of leaving the axletree, which would almost inevitably have hurled the carriage into the abyss.

SUBCONSCIOUS PERCEPTIONS

Need we, even here, relinquish the theory of subconscious perceptions? Do we know, and can the author of the anecdote, whose good faith is not in question, tell us, that certain unperceived circumstances, such as the grating of the wheel or the swaying of the carriage, did not give him the first alarm?

These examples—and there are many more of a similar kind—are enough, I think, to illustrate this class of premonitions. The problem in these cases is simpler than when it relates to fruitless warnings; at least, it is simpler so long as we do not bring into discussion the question of discarnate spirits, of unknown minds, or of an actual knowledge of the future; otherwise, the same difficulty reappears, and the warning which this time seems efficacious is in reality just as vain. In fact, the mysterious entity which knows that the traveler will go to the water's edge, that the wheel will be on the point of leaving the axle, that the promontory will fall at a precise moment, must, at the same time, know that the traveler will not take the last, fatal step, that the carriage will not be overturned, that the canoe will pull away from the promontory. It is inadmissible that, seeing one thing, it will not see the other, since everything happens at the same point in the course of the same second. Can we say that, if it had not given warning, the little saving movement would not have been executed? How can we imagine a future which, at one and the same time, has parts that are steadfast and others that are not? If it is foreseen that the promontory will fall and that the traveler will escape, thanks to the supernatural warning, it is necessarily foreseen that the warning will be given; and, if so, what is the point of this futile comedy?

I see no reasonable explanation of it in the spiritist or spiritualistic theory, which postulates a complete knowledge of the future, at least at a settled point and moment. On the other hand, if we adhere to the theory of a subliminal consciousness, we find there an explanation which is quite worthy of acceptance. This subliminal consciousness, though, in the majority of cases, it has no clear and comprehensive vision of the immediate future, can, nevertheless, possess an intuition of imminent danger, thanks to indications that escape our ordinary perception. It can also have a partial, intermittent, and so-to-speak flickering vision of the future event, and, if doubtful, can risk giving an incoherent warning, which, for that matter, will change nothing in that which already is.

THE CONTROL OF PREMONITIONS

In conclusion, let us state once more that fruitful premonitions necessarily annihilate events in the bud and consequently work their own destruction, so that any control becomes impossible. They would have an existence only if they prophesied a general event which the subject would not escape but for the warning. If they had said to anyone intending to go to Messina two or three months before the catastrophe, "Don't go, for the town will be destroyed before the month is out," we should have an excellent example. But it is a remarkable thing that genuine premonitions of this kind are very rare and nearly always rather indefinite in regard to events of a general order. In M. Bozzano's excellent collection, which is a sort of compendium of premonitory phenomena, the only pretty clear cases are taken from the *Journal of the S. P. R.* In one, a mother sent a servant to bring home her little daughter, who had already left the house with the intention of going through the "railway garden," a strip of ground between the sea-wall and the railway embankment, in order to sit on the great stones by the seaside and see the trains pass by. A few minutes after the little girl's departure, the mother had distinctly and repeatedly heard a voice within her say, "Send for her back, or something dreadful will happen to her." Now, soon after, a train ran off the line and the engine and tender fell, breaking through the protecting wall and crashing down on the very stones where the child was accustomed to sit.

We may add to this the prevision of the battle of Borodino, as told by the journal of Stephen Grellet, the Quaker.

About three months before the French army entered Russia, the wife of General Toutschkoff dreamed that she was at an inn in a town unknown to her, and that her father came into her room, holding her only son by the hand, and said to her, in a piteful tone: "Your happiness is at an end. He"—meaning Countess Toutschkoff's husband—"has fallen. He has fallen at Borodino."

The dream was repeated a second and a third time. Her anguish of mind was such that she woke her husband and asked him, "Where is Borodino?"

They looked for the name on the map and did not find it.

AN HISTORIC INSTANCE

Before the French armies reached Moscow, Count Toutschkoff was placed at the head of the army of reserve; and one morning her father, holding her son by the hand, entered her room at the inn where she was staying. In great distress, as she had beheld him in her dream, he cried out: "He has fallen. He has fallen at Borodino."

Then she saw herself in the very same room, and through the windows beheld the very same objects that she had seen in her dreams. Her husband was one of the many who perished in the battle fought near the river Borodino, from which an obscure village takes its name.

This is evidently a very rare and perhaps solitary example of a long-dated prediction of a great historic event which nobody could foresee. It stirs more deeply than any other the enormous problems of fatality, free will, and responsibility. But has it been attested with sufficient rigor for us to rely upon it? That I cannot say. In any case, it has not been sifted by the Society for Psychical Research. Next, from the special point of view that interests us for the moment, we are unable to declare that this premonition had any chance of being of avail and preventing the general from going to Borodino. It is highly probable that he did not know where he was going or where he was; besides, the irresistible machinery of war held him fast, and it was not his part to disengage his destiny. The premonition, therefore, could only have been given because it was certain not to be obeyed.

As for the previous case, we must here again remark the usual strange reservations and observe how difficult it is to explain these premonitions save by attributing them to our subconsciousness. The main, unavoidable event is not precisely stated; but a subordinate consequence seems to be averted, as though to make us believe in some definite power of free will. Nevertheless, the mysterious entity that foresaw the catastrophe must also have foreseen that nothing would happen to the person whom it was warning; and this brings us back to the useless farce of which we spoke above. Whereas, with the theory of a subconscious self, the latter may have, not this time by inferences or indications that escape our perception but by other unknown means, a vague presentiment of an impending peril, or, as I have already said, a partial, intermittent, and unsettled vision of the future event, and, in its doubt, may utter its cry of alarm.

Whereupon, let us recognize that it is almost forbidden to human reason to stray in these regions, and that the part of a prophet is, next to that of a commentator of prophecies, one of the most difficult and thankless that a man can attempt to sustain on the world's stage.

THE PREEXISTENCE OF THE FUTURE

I am not sure if it is really necessary, before closing this essay, to follow in the wake of many others and broach the problem of the preexistence of the future, which includes those of fatality, of free will, of time, and of space—that is to say, all the points that touch the essential sources of the great mystery of the universe. The theologians and the metaphysicians have tackled it from every side without giving us the least hope of solving it. Among those which life sets us, there is none to which our brain seems more definitely and strictly closed; and they remain, if not as unimaginable, at least as incomprehensible as on the day when they were first perceived. What corresponds, outside us, with what we call time and space? We know nothing about it; and Kant, speaking in the name of the "apriorists," who hold that the idea of time is innate in us, does not teach us much when he tells us that time, like space, is an *a priori* form of our sensibility, that is to say, an intuition preceding experience, even as Guyau, among the "empiricists,"

who consider that this idea is acquired only by experience, does not enlighten us any more by declaring that this same time is the abstract formula of the changes in the universe. Whether space, as Leibnitz maintains, be an order of coexistence and time an order of sequences, whether it be by space that we succeed in representing time or whether time be an essential form of any representation, whether time be the father of space or space the father of time, one thing is certain, which is that the efforts of the Kantian or neo-Kantian apriorists and of the pure empiricists and the idealistic empiricists all end in the same darkness, that all the philosophers who have grappled with the formidable dual problem, among whom one may mention indiscriminately the names of the greatest thinkers of yesterday and to-day—Herbert Spencer, Helmholtz, Renouvier, James Sully, Stumpf, James Ward, William James, Stuart Mill, Ribot, Fouillée, Guyau, Bain, Lechalas, Balmès, Dunan, and endless others—have been unable to tame it, and that, however much their theories may contradict one another, they are all equally defensible and alike struggle vainly in the darkness against shadows that are not of our world.

To catch a glimpse of this strange problem of the preexistence of the future, as it shows itself to each of us, let us essay more humbly to translate it into tangible images, to place it, as it were, upon the stage. I am writing these lines sitting on a stone in the shade of some tall beeches that overlook a little Norman village. It is one of those lovely summer days when the sweetness of life is almost visible in the azure vase of earth and sky. In the distance stretches the immense,

fertile valley of the Seine, with its green meadows planted with restful trees, between which the river flows like a long path of gladness. I am looking down on the village square, with its ring of young lime trees. A procession leaves the church, and, amid prayers and chanting, they carry the statue of the Virgin around the sacred pile. I am conscious of all the details of the ceremony—the sly old curé perfunctorily bearing a small reliquary, four choirmen opening their mouths to bawl forth vacantly the Latin words which convey nothing to them, two mischievous serving boys in frayed cassocks, a score of little girls, young girls, and old maids, in white, starched and flounced, followed by six or seven village notables in baggy frock coats. The pageant disappears behind the trees, comes into sight again at the bend of the road, and hurries back into the church. The clock in the steeple strikes five, as though to ring down the curtain and mark, in the infinite history of events which none will recollect, the conclusion of a spectacle which never again, until the end of the world and the universe of worlds, will be just what it was during those seconds when it beguiled my wandering eyes.

For in vain will they repeat the procession next year and every year after—never again will it be the same. Not only will several of the actors probably have disappeared,

but all those who resume their old places in the ranks will have undergone the thousand little visible and invisible changes wrought by the passing days and weeks. In a word, this



Even those who scoff at "the Unknown Guest within us" try to interrogate the future by means of cards and other devices

insignificant moment is unique, irrecoverable, inimitable, as are all the moments in the existence of all things; and this little picture, enduring for a few seconds suspended in boundless duration, has lapsed into eternity, where henceforth it will remain in its entirety to the end of time, so much so that, if a man could one day recapture in the past, among what some one has called the "astral negatives," the image of what it was, he would find it intact, unchanged, ineffaceable, and undeni-
 able.

THE ETERNAL PRESENT

It is not difficult for us to conceive that one can thus go back and see again the "astral negatives" of an event that is no more; and retrospective clairvoyance appears to us a wonderful but not an impossible thing. It astonishes but does not stagger our reason. But, when it becomes a question of discovering the same picture in the future, the boldest imagination flounders at the first step. How are we to admit that there exists somewhere a representation or reproduction of that which has not yet existed? Nevertheless, some of the incidents which we have just been considering seem to prove in an almost conclusive manner not only that such representations are possible but that we may arrive at them more frequently, not to say more conveniently, than at those of the past. Now, once this representation preexists, as we are obliged to admit in the case of a certain number of premonitions, the riddle remains the same, whether the preexistence be one of a few hours, a few years, or several centuries. It is therefore possible—for, in these matters, we must go straight to extremes or else leave them alone—it is therefore possible that a seer mightier than any of to-day, some god, demigod, or demon, some unknown, universal, or vagrant intelligence, saw that procession a million years ago, at a time when nothing existed of that which composes and surrounds it, and when the very earth on which it moves had not yet risen from the ocean depths. And other seers, as mighty as the first, who, from age to age, contemplated the same spot and the same moment, would always have perceived through the vicissitudes and upheavals of seas, shores, and forests, the same procession going around the same little church that still lay slum-

bering in the oceanic ooze and made up of the same persons sprung from a race that was, perhaps, not yet represented on the earth.

It is obviously difficult for us to understand that the future can thus precede chaos, that the present is at the same time the future and the past, or that that which is not yet exists already at the same time that it is no more. But, on the other hand, it is just as hard to conceive that the future does not preexist, that there is nothing before the present, and that everything is only present or past. It is very probable that, to a more universal intelligence than ours, everything is but an eternal present, an immense *punctum stans*, as the metaphysicians say, in which all the events are on one plane; but it is no less probable that we ourselves, so long as we are men, in order to understand aught of this eternal present, will always be obliged to divide it into three parts. Thus caught between two mysteries equally baffling to our intelligence, whether we deny or admit the preexistence of the future, we are really only wrangling over words. In the one case, we give the name of "present," from the point of view of a perfect intelligence, to that which to us is the future; in the other, we give the name of "future" to that which, from the point of a perfect intelligence, is the present. But, after all, it is incontestable in both cases that, at least from our point of view, the future preexists, since preexistence is the only name by which we can describe and the only form under which we can conceive that which we do not yet see in the present.

THE PROBLEM OF SPACE

Attempts have been made to shed light on the riddle by transferring it to space. It is true that it there loses the greater part of its obscurity; but this apparently is because, in changing its environment, it has completely changed its nature and no longer bears any relation to what it was when it was placed in time. We are told, for instance, that innumerable cities distributed over the surface of the earth are to us as if they were not, so long as we have not seen them, and only begin to exist on the day when we visit them. That is true; but space, outside all metaphysical speculations, has realities for us which time does not possess. Space, although very mysterious and

incomprehensible once we pass certain limits, is nevertheless not, like time, incomprehensible and illusory in all its parts. We are certainly quite able to conceive that those towns which we have never seen and doubtless never will see indubitably exist, whereas we find it much more difficult to imagine that the catastrophe which, fifty years hence, will annihilate one of them already exists as really as the town itself. We are capable of picturing a spot whence, with keener eyes than those which we boast today, we should see in one glance all the cities of the earth and even those of other worlds; but it is much less easy for us to imagine a point in the ages whence we should simultaneously discover the past, the present, and the future, because the past, the present, and the future are three orders of duration which cannot find room at the same time in our intelligence and which inevitably devour one another. How can we picture to ourselves, for instance, a point in eternity at which our little procession already exists, while it is not yet, and although it is no more? Add to this the thought that it is necessary and inevitable, from the millenaries which had no beginning, that, at a given moment, at a given place, the little procession should leave the little church in a given manner and that no known or imaginable will can change anything in it in the future any more than in the past, and we begin to understand that there is no hope of understanding.

AN OCCURRENCE IN SICILY

We find among the cases collected by M. Bozzano a singular premonition wherein the unknown factors of space and time are continued in a very curious fashion. In August, 1910, Cavaliere Giovanni di Figueroa, one of the most famous fencing-masters at Palermo, dreamed that he was in the country, going along a road white with dust, which brought him to a broad, plowed field. In the middle of the field stood a rustic building, with a ground floor used for storerooms and cow-sheds, and on the right a rough hut made of branches and a cart with some harness lying in it.

A peasant wearing dark trousers, with a black-felt hat on his head, came forward to meet him, asked him to follow him, and took him round behind the house. Through a low, narrow door they entered a little stable with a short winding stone staircase

leading to a loft over the entrance to the house. A mule fastened to a swinging manger was blocking the bottom step, and the *cavaliere* had to push it aside before climbing the staircase. On reaching the loft, he noticed that from the ceiling were suspended strings of melons, tomatoes, onions, and Indian corn. In this room were two women and a little girl; and through a door leading to another room he caught sight of an extremely high bed, unlike any that he had even seen before.

Here the dream broke off. It seemed to him so strange that he spoke of it to several of his friends, whom he mentions by name and who are ready to confirm his statements.

On the 12th of October, in the same year, in order to support a fellow townsman in a duel, he accompanied the seconds, by motor-car, from Naples to Marano, a place which he had never visited or even heard of. As soon as they were some way in the country, he was curiously impressed by the white and dusty road. The car pulled up at the side of a field which he at once recognized. They alighted, and he remarked to one of the seconds: "This is not the first time that I have been here. There should be a house at the end of this path and on the right a hut and a cart with some harness in it."

As a matter of fact, everything was as he described it. An instant later, at the exact moment foreseen by the dream, the peasant in the dark trousers and the black-felt hat came up and asked him to follow him. But, instead of walking behind him, the *cavaliere* went in front, for he already knew the way. He found the stable and, exactly at the place which it occupied two months before, near its swinging manger, the mule blocking the way to the staircase. The fencing-master went up the steps and once more saw the loft, with the ceiling hung with melons, onions, and tomatoes, and, in a corner on the right, the two silent women and the child, identical with the figures in his dream, while in the next room he recognized the bed whose extraordinary height had so much impressed him.

THE GREAT ILLUSION

It really looks as if the facts themselves, the extramundane realities, the eternal verities, or whatever we may be pleased to call them, have tried to show us here that time and space are one and the same illusion,



one and the same convention, and have no existence outside our little day-spanned understanding; that "everywhere" and "always" are exactly synonymous terms and reign alone as soon as we cross the narrow boundaries of the obscure consciousness in which we live. We are quite ready to admit that Cavaliere di Figueroa may have had by clairvoyance an exact and detailed vision of places which he was not to visit until later. This is a pretty frequent and almost classical phenomenon, which, as it affects the realities of space, does not astonish us beyond measure and, in any case, does not take us out of the world which our senses perceive. The field, the house, the hut, the loft do not move; and it is no miracle that they should be found in the same place.

But, suddenly, quitting this domain where all is stationary, the phenomenon is transferred to time and, in those unknown places, at the foretold second, brings together all the moving actors of that little drama in two acts, of which the first was performed some two and a half months before, in the depths of some mysterious other life where it seemed to be motionlessly and irrevocably awaiting its terrestrial realization. Any explanation would but condense this vapor of petty mysteries into a few drops in the ocean of mysteries.

HOW THE UNKNOWN GUEST ACTS

Let us note here again, in passing, the strange freakishness of these premonitions. They accumulate the most precise and circumstantial details as long as the scene remains insignificant, but come to a sudden stop before the one tragic and interesting scene of the drama—the duel and its issue. Here again we recognize the inconsistent, impotent, ironical, or humorous habits of our unknown guest.

But we will not prolong these somewhat vain speculations concerning space and time.

We are merely playing with words that represent very badly ideas which we do not put into form at all. To sum up, if it is difficult for us to conceive that the future preexists, perhaps it is even more difficult for us to understand that it does not exist; moreover, a certain number of facts tend to prove that it is as real and definite and has, both in time and in eternity, the same permanence and the same vividness as the past.

Now, from the moment that it preexists, it is not surprising that we should be able to know it; it is even astonishing, granted that it overhangs us on every side, that we should not discover it oftener and more easily. It remains to be learned what would become of our life if everything were foreseen in it, if we saw it unfolding beforehand in its entirety, with its events which would have to be inevitable, because, if it were possible for us to avoid them, they would not exist and we could not perceive them.

IF WE KNEW THE FUTURE

Suppose that, instead of being abnormal, uncertain, obscure, debatable, and very unusual, prediction became, so to speak, scientific, habitual, clear, and infallible. In a short time, having nothing more to foretell, it would die of inanition. If, for instance, it was prophesied to me that I must die in the course of a journey in Italy, I should naturally abandon the journey; therefore it could not have been predicted to me; and thus all life would soon be nothing but inaction, pause, and abstention, a sort of vast desert where the embryos of stillborn events would be gathered in heaps and where nothing would grow save perhaps one or two more or less fortunate enterprises and the little insignificant incidents which no one would trouble to avoid. But these again are questions to which there is no solution; and we will not pursue them further.

The Eternal Lover

How is love won? Would you say that this story describes a special case—or is there something common to all men in the way of Tilbury Shaw with Kathryn Linwood? She has no illusions about him; she hates him, yet "the touch of his lips drew all the will out of her." Then, why? Mr. Thompson does not answer the question, but he has written an unusually interesting story, and one that will give you something to think about.

By Vance Thompson

Illustrated by Walter Dean Goldbeck

THE day had been hard and discordant, and she had missed her luncheon. She went into a little tea-room off Fifth Avenue. It was a gaudy place that seemed to be trying to lead the double life of a barroom and a Chinese pagoda. At squat lacquer tables, men and women were drinking tea or cocktails out of porcelain cups. She stood for a moment looking round the smoky room in search of a table. She was a long, white, narrow woman, delicately and beautifully fashioned. It was as though she were made out of finer clay than ordinary women and by a more delicate artist. She was dressed in black and wore a black hat with a tall, green feather. In one of the dim corners a table seemed to be empty. She went toward it and suddenly stopped with abrupt repulsion. At the table sat a hunch-backed dwarf, overdressed, bejeweled, violently perfumed; his face was sallow and bony, and out of it stared eyes black and malicious as the eyes of a swan.

She was ashamed of herself, but the impulse that checked her was stronger than she was. She had a secret and immediate antipathy for any violation of the antique and beautiful order of forms; and the dwarf awoke in her a confused resentment—a faint but real horror. It was always that way. A cripple, a blind man, the deformed hurt and repelled her. She would say to herself: "It's ignoble! That man's a brother—a limping and clouded and unhappy brother, and I should be sorry for him." But she could never overcome her instinctive sense of repulsion. And now, she knew, the hunchback had seen and understood, for his

poor haggard face darkened savagely. She stood irresolute, flushed.

"Why it's Kat Linwood," some one said behind her; she turned and, at an adjacent table, saw a fat, dark girl beckoning her.

She was glad to go. As she crossed the room—a slim, straight girl, exceptionally tall—the men looked at her. Her walking-dress was short and modish, and the men could see the narrow, beautiful feet and the fineness of her ankles. There was a man at her friend's table, and, as she approached, he looked her up and down with swift appraisal. It was rudely done, but, somehow, she did not mind. She was interested in his eyes, hot, round, self-complacent. There was a kind of reddish light in them that was curious and fascinating. Her friend made a place for her; this friend was dark, profuse, cheerily vulgar, and wore a gown the color of the red-lacquer table. She said:

"Don't you know Artie? I thought you did. Artie, this is Kathryn Linwood. She writes. Mr. Shaw."

So it was Tilbury Shaw.

She was faintly surprised; he was quietly dressed; his voice was low and firm, and he had the accent of a gentleman. He did not look like an actor. He seemed out of his class, for she classed them all together—actors, singers, fiddlers—the men who go through life vibrating instead of thinking. He was talking, of course, about himself, and she listened without much heed, drinking her tea and eating her toast.

"Kat and I were classmates at college," her friend said, "and we broke into Park Row together."

"How pleasant!" said Shaw. He had a

swift, cordial smile; in a moment he had brought the conversation back to himself.

Drinking her tea, Kathryn mused; yes, they had come out of Vassar five years ago—with hundreds of others. A few had gone into business, into social-settlement work, on the stage, into schools; but most of her classmates, after one fearful glance at the world and what was in it, had fled to the warmth and safety of lighted rooms and matrimony. Her mind had not turned that way. She had come from a lean and learned home and had had to fight her way through college; and now for five years she had been pen-fighting the world, getting in the way of return a roof-tree in Waverley Place, food, clothes, and a little fame in the dingy, anonymous lanes of literature and journalism. Out of the rags and ribbons of her scholarship, she had made a little book on the children of Greece and their games and toys of the long ago. One newspaper critic praised it in five lines; but her publisher said no one bought it. But that was to be only the beginning. She had planned a big book on the women of Athens, for in them she saw the mothers of civilization. She spent hours (when she wasn't writing fluent copy for her newspaper) in the Greek room at the Library.

But this afternoon she was tired; her ambition sagged wearily under the weight of the day. She was in no mood for talk. She would have dodged Julia, her cheery, vulgar friend, had she not been upset by the dwarf. Her thoughts went away to the violet land of Greece and she hardly listened to what Shaw was saying—hearing only the music of his warm, low voice as it chanted a litany of I and My and Me. Men did not greatly interest her, especially men who vibrated instead of thinking. She had a swift scorn for fools.

Shaw was not playing now; he had not been able to find anything—"nothing for Me—I won't let Myself down."

He told them of the degradation of the stage, which was due to the greed of the managers and the subservience of the playwrights. "But the people are all right—the great American people has the heart of a child—it wants pure plays and the great actor." There was something extremely personal in the way he spoke of the great actor. Kathryn told herself that he, at all events, was a child. He was a compact, nervous man of middle height. His face

was handsome—save for the loose, large mouth. His reddish-brown hair was thick and soft, without any curl in it. The hands he gesticulated with were rather big but very well shaped and white. There was reddish down on them; it even grew up around his rings. When Kathryn got up to go, he rose and took her hand. She had not yet put her glove on, and she felt as though he had marked her fingers with a burning stain—as though something hot and unwholesome had dripped from his white, hairy hand.

"Thank you," he said gently; "you have given me courage—courage!"

The jasper eyes looked straight at her.

The man's a fool, she told herself, as she walked down the avenue, with his "Courage, courage!" She had hardly spoken to him. She wondered how Julia could sit goggling at a red thing like that by the hour; and she thanked God she was not as other women are.

It was a pleasure to be back in the cool, gray study of her flat; it was a grave, celibate room with books and books and books, casts from the antique, and photographs of serene marbles. She turned up the light over the writing-table, where the neat manuscript lay in orderly piles. This was where she really lived; this was the true home of her ambition; the hours she spent in the dark underworld of pen and ink meant only bread—here she put all thoughts of them away. It was so good to be alone—alone here with her work and her cold, fine, resolute mind. She hardly knew she had a body. It had always been merely a thing she walked the world in—like her shoes and stockings and dress. One of her favorite phrases was, "I have a polar psychology." And indeed she went through her dingy life of woman wage-earner, white and untouched, as moonlight walks a muddy road. Men never tried to flirt with her. Her cold self-mastery was too evident. The men in the tea-shop would not have looked at her, as they looked that afternoon, if her serenity had not been broken—jarred into more feminine vibrations—by the shock the hunchback had given her. She was exactly what she appeared to be—a tall, slim, delicately made woman of twenty-seven in whom every energy had gone to feed the cold, white fires of her brain.

"Still a little tired," she told herself.

She went into her bedroom and took off



DRAWN BY WALTER DEAN GOLDBECK

Then she laid down her pen and looked at the hand which had held it. That was the hand Tilbury Shaw had taken in his own!

her walking-gown and shoes. She was proud of those slim feet, and had dainty silk things to put on them; indeed, everything about her was dainty—as though her physical garb were a symbol of the fine and beautiful mind within. She went to the glass and ruffled her light-brown hair, loosening it about her large forehead. It was done for comfort, not coquetry, but it softened the cold beauty of her face. Then from the closet she took a black student-gown and slipped it on. It gave her a look at once boyish and monastic as she girdled it round her waist. She went back to her writing-table, but she could not work. Coldly she forced herself to write a page; it was on *Lysidice*, the good housewife *Antipater* wrote of in a faded Greek poem. Then she laid down her pen and looked at the hand which had held it. That was the hand *Tilbury Shaw* had taken in his own!

"It's because I'm tired that my mind wanders like this," she said, half aloud. "Come, my girl, to work!"

Before she could take up her pen, the door-bell rang. She went impatiently to the door and opened it on *Tilbury Shaw*.

Her gray eyes hardened with anger. That he should dare to come here! He was quick with an apology.

"How rude you must think me! How rude you must have thought me this afternoon!"

She had no idea what he was talking about.

"How rude—my excuse is I did not know who you were. I did not get your name. I did not connect you with the book—those violet fields of Greece! It was not until you were gone that *Juley* told me, and she couldn't come on just now, and so I made her give me your address and I came to apologize. What a brute you must have thought me, never to speak of it—and I love that book!"

It was ridiculous, but she supposed she had to let him in.

"Is *Julia* coming on soon?"

"Yes."

He sat down in one of her feminine chairs and held his hat on his knee.

"Won't you lay it down?" she asked.

He put it on the floor and looked round the room in his swift way of appraising things. Not many men had been there; *Julia* used to bring them up sometimes until she put her foot down on it; they filled the

place with smoke, and one of them had burned the top of the piano with a forgotten cigarette. *Shaw* seemed to fit into the room. He was grave, serene, Greek. He had taken the color of his surroundings like a chameleon. His hot, jasper eyes were veiled with decent respect.

"You did not know I read such books"—he took a new copy of "*Children of the Long Ago*" from his pocket—"but you must not think of me as an actor, only as one of your readers. I want you to put your name in it for me. Will you? It stirs me strangely—these little ones who played and laughed in the violet fields."

She could not be angry, though she was certain he was acting; but he was acting nicely, and she was pleased that he had pretended not to notice her foolish, scholastic gown.

"My autograph? Of course," she said.

He got up and handed her the little book—there were asphodels stamped on the white cover—coming quite close to her.

"You don't mind?" he asked, and his voice was warmer.

She had not minded in the least, but now that he asked the question in that way, she decided she certainly would not put her name in his book. She laid it on the writing-table. He did not urge her.

"What a play it would make!"

"A play?"

She had rarely been accused of having a sense of humor, but at this she laughed outright.

"You're too silly, Mr. Shaw; it's a book about toys."

"I see myself in Greece—I see myself there—white maidens pass—a priest holds up his hands—I am being led away—like this—"

He struck an attitude and looked at her sidewise, and, by some curious trick of the mummer's art, this modern man in tweeds called up the picture of a dark, tragic drama, antique, sacrificial. It struck her as uncanny, as inhuman. He came back to his every-day look.

"You will write the play?"

"I? It's absurd."

"We shall write this play, Miss *Linwood*," he said gravely. "It's a duty we owe my contemporaries—to give the great American people a pure and noble play—a play of sacrifice. I see myself already. I sacrifice everything—all, all! For love."

It must be a woman's love. Wait—I see that already. I must die for her—a drama of sacrifice."

Now, the man himself was not ridiculous; there was something noble in the way he mouthed these phrases about sacrifice. The word seemed to be dignified into something epic. Kathryn saw him with other eyes. She saw him living in the noble Greek world she knew so well—the antique world from which she was an exile. She wondered if she could make a play!

It was a Sunday afternoon, three weeks, or perhaps a month, later; they were in her study, working on the play. It was nearly finished, she thought; a pile of her neat manuscript lay on the table.

"Portia," he said (she was wearing her college-gown), "it won't do!"

"What do you mean, Tilbury?"

"I've got a new idea—the idea. We've been on the wrong track. Greece is all right. I've got to wear that costume—you can see that—sandals, a fillet round my head. Then white—nothing but white. But the idea! I will try and make it clear to you."

She did not smile. Her intellectual pride was not as high as it had been a little month ago.

"What is the greatest play in the world? What brings the tears to the eyes of women? Stonymen sob when it's played right. 'Camille.'"

"'Camille?' You mean 'La Dame aux Camélias?'"

"Of course. That play made Sarah Bernhardt. You see my

idea? Reverse that play—it is the man who sacrifices himself. Do you see me? I am dying—a Greek bed with purple cushions. It is for her sake. I am but a wandering minstrel. I have no right to her love. I release her. I send her back to her high-born kinsmen. But the sacrifice is too much for me—I die. You can see me. The voice fails me—a gasp—love, devotion, sacrifice. Kathryn, that is the play."

And it was; that was the play she wrote, while he paced the room acting, shouting,



Shaw kissed her and went forth to confront his adversary, the manager

moaning, giving her swift, extraordinary hints, beating up her cold, white prose into bubbling theatricalism.

"It's a male 'Camille'—I shall hold them, like that!" He stretched out his hand, palm upward, and suddenly clenched it into a triumphant fist. He could see himself, dressed like a young Greek god, loving some white, patrician girl in the violet fields, sacrificing himself, dying for her—on purple cushions! And the play was written. She typed it and red-inked it herself; and Shaw kissed her and went forth to confront his adversary, the manager.

She felt as though she had been living in the ozone and sulphur of an electric storm. She threw open the window of her study and looked out. An obscure night was falling upon the city, a night without stars or wind. The sky was wrapped in hot, shadowy clouds—like rumpled bed-linen. Kathryn stood for a long time at the window, staring with heavy eyes.

"I don't love him," she kept telling herself; "I hate him," and yet she knew when he entered the room she would go to him and wait, with shivering eagerness, for the touch of his lips and hands. Clearly and coldly she could see every defect in him—the shallow emotionalism he played with as a child plays with a toy and which he called love; and indeed he was like an amazing child—with flashes of vanity which seemed to light up abysmal depths of self-love. And with a child's cruelty he had taken her life in his hands and broken it in pieces. Oh, surely she hated him! She had not wept when her mother died, though she felt part of her life go away from her in that coffin; she had never wept that she could remember; but suddenly she covered her face with her hands and groped her way to the couch and lay there, shaken with sobs.

They had worked in the evenings—the only free time she had, for she dared not give up her daily work; and Julia, soon bored with the play, left them to themselves. At first she had thought only of the play. Her mind fastened on the problem of these lives, and she followed it with keen intellectual pleasure. This was real work, mind-work, work worth while. But he was always there. She had but to look up to see his animated face, the flexible red mouth, the round, hot eyes. She felt a strange sense of intimacy with him. It was, at first, an intimacy purely intellectual—as though

he were one of the people in her play. She could not dissociate him from the heroic lover she was building up in the Greek world of her imagination. He never made love to her. The first time he laid his hand on her she felt a kind of shock run through her shoulder and along her spine. She let his hand lie there. It seemed to quiver with a communicative life of its own, as though it were telling her something quite different from what the man himself was saying at the time. And Shaw, with his quick sensitiveness, seemed to realize what she was feeling. He turned her face up with his other hand and kissed her mouth. She gasped with sheer physical terror, but he held her, and the warm, loose, red mouth clung to her like some animal of myth and fable. The atmosphere round her was like a cloud—a cloud dense with flickering animal magnetism. The blood beat in her temples. She did not struggle—

Lying on her couch in the dark room she thought of that night. And she hated the man and she hated herself. She wondered if in every woman there was a little of the wild beast of the forest. She sat up and dried her eyes. It was like marrying a child—a bad, wicked child; but there was nothing else to do. When the play was on, he had promised. She tried to picture what her life would be like. When he was not near her, she could judge him with cold impartiality. He had brain of a kind, active but in such disorder that he was constitutionally beyond the reach of logic. He would tell himself a thing and then believe it. (It was a strange fund of knowledge he had.) And she knew he could not tell the truth; it was because he did not know what the truth was.

What was the use of blaming him? As well blame a robin. It will steal the hair from your head to line its nest with and carol on your tombstone.

And his moods were like water. Would he come in laughing? Or sullen, like a rancorous child? She waited for him. She knew the sound of his foot on the stairs. What strong, nervous hands he had—like little animals, hairy and white! Ashamed and hungry, she waited for him.

Day after day it was like this. The managers wouldn't take the play; the agents who had it dangled promises. He was savage, and blazed with a sort of barbaric fury. For the first time in her steady, well-



DRAWN BY WALTER DEAN GOLDBECK

She saw the hunchback. There was laughter on his sallow face and malice in the black beads of his eyes. She dared not pass him; abruptly she went back to the lighted street

governed life, she knew what fear was, but his rage always ended in an outburst of theatrical self-pity that moved him to tears. She did not try to conceal her contempt.

"Don't, don't; you hurt me, woman!" he said, "and I love you."

She did not repulse him.

He had no money, and she was able to help him. She had always been economical; money was a very real thing to her—but to him it was a feather to fly with. He would take ten dollars from her purse and go out and spend it on flowers for her. (Like most men who do not drink alcohol or smoke, he loved flowers.) One day she told him she had no money for him but that, in two days, she could cash some coupons. She had twelve thousand dollars, and never, perhaps, was twelve thousand dollars so patiently and painfully gathered; two generations of lean school-teachers had spent their lives saving it up, penny by penny; it had come to her from her mother—nearly all of it, for she had been able to add only a few hundred dollars to this fund which was her wall against illness and old age.

"It isn't enough, but it will have to do," was the way he announced his project. Every fiber in her tingled with protest; with implacable logic she saw it was madness to throw this sad little fortune into a theater; but his arms were round her; his strong, unreleasing hands held her; his red, warm mouth was on her throat. After she had given him the money, she tried to persuade herself that she believed in the play—and in him. In her heart she knew she believed in neither. How could she write a play? And how could he be anything but a child, unstable, careless, breaking her fortune as he had broken her life? And she saw herself living with him, through all the years, until they were old, and she shuddered at the vision. They were to be married. She would have nothing secret, and he—she did not know whether it was reasonable or not—said he did not want to go before the public in this new part as a married man. But after the first night—after the glorious triumph was well begun—they would go proudly to the "Little Church Around the Corner." It is absolutely true that he never for a moment confused her clear-seeing mind, but the touch of his lips drew the will out of her.

There was only one thing more he could take away from her, and he took it.

"Kat, I've announced the play in my

name—it had to be. My manager wouldn't yield. You see, my name means everything—produced by Tilbury Shaw, written by Tilbury Shaw, and Tilbury Shaw as star, heading the Tilbury Shaw Company! It had to be. And, Kat, it means your fortune as much as mine. It is for us—a sacred bond."

What did it matter? The hair from her head to-line his nest!

She did not see the rehearsals. He wanted her to see him in his triumph. The first night he would play for her alone. He had kept the stage-box for her. "I want you to see my eyes."

During the long month of rehearsal he was irritable, uncertain. Often she did not see him for days. Then he would suddenly appear—perhaps in the evening, late, when she had given up all hope. She would try to harden herself against him, but he laughed and broke down her defenses with his white hands. They had never lost their power; they sprayed a kind of physical magnetism on her.

The play opened in an up-town theater. She dressed herself very carefully that night, and spent a long time arranging her light-brown hair so that it should hide the forehead too white, too high for the rest of her delicate face. Her mouth, especially, was delicate—there is no other word for the exquisite carving of her thin, faintly colored lips. When she was in evening dress it was apparent she was what the French call a *fausse maigre*—there was no hint of leanness about the straight throat and sloping shoulders; they were fragile but full. She carried the flowers he had given her. For evening wrap she wore a long fur coat—that, too, he had given her that morning. She thought of it as a fragment out of the wreck. Julia went with her in a taxi-cab. Of course, Julia knew everything, but she had decided, in her cheery, vulgar way, that it was the better bred thing to pretend to know nothing about it. She talked of Shaw as "Artie" and predicted that "The Lover"—it was his original title—would go like wild-fire; she had seen the dress rehearsal. She was always fresh and gay. The newspaper work never dragged on her as it did on Kathryn. And Kathryn had been working hard—with a new greed for money, born of her fear of the future, her half-confessed distrust of Shaw. If the play failed!

She was white and nervous when she took

her place in the box, far at the back where she could be seen only from the stage. The house was filled with that first-night audience which is at once so critical and so kindly. And the curtain went up. She listened as in a dream. Some of the words were hers; but was it her play? What were these people doing on the stage? The sweet, grave patrician of her story—unconsciously she had pictured her as herself—was a blithe, yellow-haired girl, who whirled her white draperies as though they were skirts. And an awful Falstaff person, bald and peppery and comic, had usurped the place of the dignified father in her play. She hid herself behind a box-curtain. It was awful; it was a parody of her beautiful story—a parody of her beautiful Greece. Then she heard Tilbury's warm voice and a round of applause. She leaned forward. He was in white vesture with filleted hair. His legs, bare from knee to sandal, were like white marble. From where she sat she saw his familiar gesture, his swift, intimate smile—how well she knew it!—as he approached the blithe blond girl of the play; and she drew back again into the shadow of the curtain and listened, a curious, angry pain pulling at her heart. She told herself it was more than vulgar; it was grotesque—it was melodrama ranting in Greek dress; half-naked slave girls passed carrying paper-gilt wine-jugs, and it became bad comic opera; and she wanted to shout, "Stop it; oh, stop it!"

And then Tilbury Shaw took up the tale of his love. His voice drew her—it was warm, virile, compelling. She bent forward



Kathryn stared at the black type until she could no longer see it

and stared at him. Was it Tilbury Shaw? The sham had fallen away from him. He had shed the little meannesses of his daily life like husks. There on the stage was a young god who wooed—the eternal lover! He was youth; he was aspiration; he was love incarnate. Kathryn drew her breath in slowly. Oh, now she could see the lover of her dream! She had not been mistaken. Surely, under the tawdry surface of his temperamental personality, a great, clean soul had lain in hiding. Now at last he had revealed it to her. She saw the god in the man. She felt that her love was justified. She had not (as her fear and shame so often told her) thrown herself away for the mere physical lure of his kisses. His soul was speaking now—of this she was sure. He was speaking the love-lines she had written; the words into which she had put her new-awakened womanhood and the glory of her love, and he was speaking them—she knew—

for her. (The blond woman in his arms was but a dummy, behind which they hid their secret passion and their love.) She heard Julia saying exultingly, "He's got 'em!"

It was true. Tilbury Shaw with his warm voice and his white legs and his hot eyes had got them—he held them in his hand, "like that!" Kathryn looked at the audience; it was bent toward him—as a tree is bent in the wind. In the box opposite, a dwarf, perched on a velvet chair, was clapping his lean, bejeweled hands and grinning.

"Who's that?" she asked. "That—that hunchback in the box?"

"Why it's Ferdassen," said Julia. "Artie's manager. I told Artie there was luck in that hump."

Ill luck for her, Kathryn thought, with swift superstition; it was the hunchback she had seen in the tea-shop; she had never seen him since that day until to-night; Tilbury had not told her his manager was—this. On the stage, the story rose and fell in great waves of melodramatic emotion, and Tilbury—on purple cushions—died his sacrificial death for love's sake. All for her!

And the audience rose to him and cheered. He had "got 'em—like that!" Julia was leaning over the rail, applauding furiously, when he came out to make his speech. Kathryn went and stood beside her, steadying herself on the back of the chair. Her long, white, narrow body quivered—vacillated like a flame. Her eyes devoured him. And Shaw did not see her. He was breathing heavily. He touched his brow wearily with trailing fingers and smiled with pathetic sweetness at the American people.

"You will forgive me, dear friends; I am overcome. To write a play and produce it and act it"—he made the weary gesture again—"but if we have pleased you—"

The applause was earnest, loud, passionate.

"On behalf of myself and my associates" (the blond woman came to the footlights and bowed), "I thank you; I thank you, from my heart."

And the curtain went down, hiding first the filleted head and then the marble legs; he had not glanced in the direction of Kathryn. She stood leaning on the back of the chair, silent. Julia touched her arm.

"Come, Kat, we might as well be off. He won't want to see us to-night. You know

what a first night is. And you know what he is. It doesn't mean anything." She tried to hint her sympathy, for Kathryn was white, and the gray eyes were dark with pain.

"You think he won't want to see me, now?" she asked.

"He'd send for us if he did."

"Go home, Julia; I'm going round to the stage door."

"I'll go with you, Kat."

"Oh, go home—go away!"

She jerked on her coat impatiently; impatience was new with her—like superstition—and she went out swiftly. The stage door was in an alley to the right of the theater. There was a group of people laughing and gesticulating. She saw the hunchback. There was laughter on his sallow face and malice in the black beads of his eyes. She dared not pass him; abruptly she went back to the lighted street. Julia put her in a taxi and took her home. Of course Tilbury was not there; he would come—she wondered how soon he would come.

Not that night, not the next morning up to the time she left for her work, not even his usual telegram came—he always telegraphed his correspondence. He did not call her up at the office. Once or twice he had called her up at the office. By the time she had reached her flat that evening, she had thought it out coolly. Why should she have expected him? He was drunk with his triumph. He would be at his club, probably, reciting his litany of I and My and Me. That, too, was part of his life, as she was—waiting there alone.

He came the next afternoon about six. She had just come in. He radiated triumph, happiness, generosity. He kissed her and showered newspaper notices in her lap.

"I've read them all, Til. What a success!"

He strode up and down exultant repeating, "In my hand—like that!"

"It was wonderful, Til, and it wasn't the play—it was you!"

"It was both, Kat, for the play was me. Kat, my soul was in that play. It's there now—my soul." He lifted his eyes with a look of reverence. Suddenly he laughed like a boy and hauled her out of her chair and swung her round.

"Now let's be sensible, little woman."

He sat down and pulled her on his knee.

"There's a fortune in it. It'll go for

years on the road. I'll be on Broadway next week. A fortune! And you'll get your money back, you dear woman. How you did help me! I had to let Ferdassen in for a half-share, and you can have your check to-morrow."

She waited. Would he say nothing else? What he said was his litany, a new version fortified with quotations from the critics.

"You'll want to see me again to-night, Kat. You won't know the part. It's going stronger all the time. I'm inside it."

She said yes.

He took up his hat and stick, kissed her, and was gone. The radiance went out of the room. She felt chill and old.

The check came in a letter from Ferdassen. With it was a long "receipt in full," which she signed and sent back. Tilbury Shaw did not come. In the evening she got a telegram:

Why weren't you there last night. Don't fail to-night. Box reserved.

She put the telegram in a drawer of her table and sat down to her long-neglected book.

She dared not see him again just yet—the fierce love-music still rang in her ears. She knew, now, what she loved in him. It was the eternal lover in him that she loved. Every cell in her body hungered and cried aloud for this man—for his red mouth and his white hands and his blazing eyes. And

a deep flush of shame stained her throat and face, so fierce and physical a thing her love seemed to her. And he? Would he keep his promise? And if he did not keep it, what would become of her? God, what had he done to her! She dared not think. She must work. At the office she sought work greedily. She asked for assignments. She wanted to tire her body and her mind.

Thursday afternoon one of the Sunday editors sent for her.

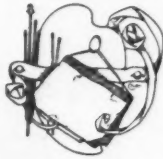
"This ought to suit you, Miss Linwood—you're our Greek expert—rush me two columns on it and I'll want it to-night."

He handed her a clipping from the afternoon edition. She took it without looking at it, waiting.

"Interview them both—and play it up light—but you know how to do it. And get it in as early as you can."

She went back to her desk before she looked at the clipping; that was fortunate. She spread it out on the writing-pad and read the head-lines in one swift glance: "A Romance of the Stage. Tilbury Shaw plays 'The Lover' in real life. Married to his leading lady this morning at the 'Little Church Around the Corner.'"

Kathryn stared at the black type until she could no longer see it. Automatically she folded up the clipping and put it in her bag. Then she stood up, took one farewell look round the familiar office, closed her desk, and went out into the street.



Jessie Willcox Smith's Mother Goose Pictures

announced in the August issue will be published early in October. There are twelve pictures in the series, printed in full color on 14x12-inch pebbled paper, and the price on publication will be 25 cents each.

The Low-Price Advance Offer Expires October 1st

A special price of \$2.00 for the set of twelve will be made on all orders accompanied by cash which reach us on or before October 1st, but after that date the price will be \$3.00 for the set, or 25 cents each for single copies, with positively no reduction. Send your order at once. Illustrated circular on request.

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Cosmopolitan Print Department

119 West 40th Street

New York City

A Rose from Utah



distinguish me from my big sister, Nannie Tout, who is a real operatic prima donna."

Miss Dawn—and the name fits her as perfectly as her rose-petal complexion matches her golden hair—insists that she is no "star." True, she made her début as one in "The Pink Lady," and has never since faded into the dim, chorus-haunted background. At this very moment of writing, she is preparing to emerge in a new musical piece which Victor Herbert and Harry B. Smith wrote with her in mind.

"It was the mere accident of my playing the violin which first got me a more prominent rôle than I had been cast for. However, it is quite true that mere accident doesn't keep a person at the front unless ambition inspires one to make good. My own ambition is, first, to make all I can, artistically and every

other way, out of my present opportunity in musical comedy. Then, maybe, I can aspire to pure comedy without the music."

"And—after that?"

"Oh, of course, being serious in professional

"It is just like looking into a mirror. I smile, and the public smiles back."

"IT is just like looking into a mirror. I smile, and the public smiles back. I've been very lucky."

One little white hand knocks wood on the manager's desk, as a blithe blond girl in blue, on her way to the baseball game, pauses to philosophize. She is explaining, with frankness and modesty, how she came to be Hazel Dawn, diva of lightsome operetta.

"Paul Rubens, the composer, at the London Gaiety, put the 'Dawn' in my stage name, just to



work don't necessarily mean giving one's whole life to it. I'm a Mormon. As we count, the really important business of life begins where art and such affairs end. Very likely, Mr. Right will come along some day—he hasn't yet. If he does, it will be no sacrifice—quite the contrary—to quit the theater and enter the home. Both offer honorable and happy careers to a woman, according to our religion. But both can't be followed at the same time.

"You see, I have ideals. One of these ideals is absolute equality between men and women. We have it now in politics in my home state—for Utah was first in the field with votes for women. Out there, in fact, everything makes for equity and harmony—in body and mind, in domestic life, in art, in love."

"Doesn't being a Mormon rather discount that?"

"No; inspires it. Our religion is a kindly,

intimate, and practical guide for every-day life.

Divine revelations come to us through nature.

If I were to lose my faith in human nature, I should grow old and sad in a minute—

Oh, yes, I'm



After success in musical comedy, Miss Dawn aspires to pure comedy without the music

going to have a dancing part in "The D butante."

Here the philosophy book was closed with a bang, and Miss Dawn floated off to the ball game.

The name of "Hazel Dawn" fits her as perfectly as her rose-petal complexion matches her golden hair

Millinery Up to Date

ANNA PENNINGTON, of this season's bumper-crop of "Follies," is a little rosebud of an individuality who describes herself as "a brisk Irish-American Quaker girl from Philadelphia," in answer to inquiries which she is obviously surprised that anybody should be interested enough to make.

So far as the flashing frivol-show of summer is concerned, Penn-
truly with-
say-
By

Miss ington
"goes
out
ing,"
which is

and precious gift in up-to-date folly-craft.

"I'm named Benzina on the program—



She is eighteen now, and just big enough to tuck into a handbox

meant that her speaking part is really nothing to speak of, but her dainty dance-act in the Tango Palace scene of "The Follies" goes with an *en train* that has made all New York talk.

It has all the air of a genuine improvisation. It is instinct with the unstudied grace and playful abandon of care-free childhood. To be able to improvise in this vein is undoubtedly a rare

Miss Pennington describes herself as a "brisk Irish-American Quaker girl from Philadelphia"

why, Satan (that's the main-squeeze character in the story-plot, of course) only knows," she confides, with that more-in-sorrow - than - in - anger look in her large, innocent gray eyes. "It was merely to fill in a spot at rehearsal that I got my chance to try a real stunt here. They told me if I had any surprises to spring, to go to it. This was awfully sudden, but I hadn't been on the road with Annette Kellerman and 'The Red Widow' without getting a few ideas. So I just imagined myself having a little romp, as we used to do at dancing-school in Philadelphia — before I grew up."

She is eighteen now, and just big enough to tuck into a bandbox.

"Well, I vamped a dance-act as I went along, putting in bits I remembered in my own way, and it got to be quite interesting. Lots of fun, too.

"Then Mr. Stamper, the musical director and composer, said, 'That's eccentric, all right, but it don't fit any music.' 'Then make your music to fit the dance,' Mr. Ziegfeld sug-

gested, 'and maybe "Penny" can put it over in the regular performance.' Mr. Stamper did—and I did, too. Put it over, I mean. I'm afraid that's all there is to my little story."

The real story of Miss Pennington, at the present stage of development, is the psychological one of a new kind of artistic flower unfolding. Its motive is merely that

Her work is instinct with the un-studied grace and playful abandon of care-free childhood

Benzina of the dainty dance-act in the 1914 "Follies"

of an individual, delightful, show-girl debutante in the making.

Where gaiety is such as this, the "Follies" must be wise.



Alice
Brady
as Beulah,
the little
widowed moth-
er, in "The Things
That Count"

Alice in Stageland

ALICE BRADY is a young person worth seeking but very difficult to find at home in New York in midsummer. So the interviewer remarked, in self-congratulation, as the winsome, eager débutante of half a dozen different plays, not counting musical comedies (though she insists she has never made what you might call a regular, formal début) flitted into town one July morning, all the way from Dayton, Ohio.

"Well, it's difficult for me to find myself," admits this oddly sympathetic, dark-haired daughter of Stageland. "And, do you know, I sometimes think it might be a good thing if I *could* get away from Alice Brady, and keep away. You know what I mean—in the character-acting line.

"I have learned a lot; but what I have learned isn't calculated to give me a puffed-up opinion of myself, I can tell you. Grace George has coached me and criticized me—that has been my really great luck and advantage, especially when she would tear me all to pieces and then put me together again, entirely changed, in rehearsing a part. That was the education that made me, at

times, apparently successful as an actress. But whatever I tried to work out in my own way was just myself making believe very hard at something. It might please or was just as likely to displease, according to circumstances. Anyway, it wasn't acting, because there was no intelligent, artistic method behind it. A real actress has to have a method, not be just herself. That's what I mean when I say I want to get rid of Alice Brady. Hope I've got time to, yet."

The winsome, eager
débutante of half a dozen
different plays

As regards time, yes. Miss Alice is a very young "star" actress indeed, with practically the whole of her professional career before her.

A graduate of the New England Conservatory of Music, her outsetting stage-venture, three years ago, was in an ephemeral operetta called "The Balkan Princess." Miss Brady has sung, within the last three seasons in the Casino Gilbert-Sullivan revivals, such responsible parts as Kate in the "Pirates," and Pitti Sing in "The Mikado." With this small fund of experience she essayed the portrayal of Meg in the Playhouse production of "Little Women." That was a real debut, if you like, and a triumphant one. In it was distinctly forecast the sympathetic charm which none could miss in Beulah, the little widowed mother in Laurence Eyre's pretty, Yuletide-atmosphere piece, "The Things That Count."

"You've made me do what I never do, Alice Brady," said a big Metropolitan dramatic critic as he slipped behind the scenes at the *première* of this play, "and now I'm breaking my rule in coming around here and telling you—because I shan't

write it in my notice. You've made me cry!"

"There's encouragement," the young actress acknowledges. "I get new hope for the future when people show that they like me, even though it isn't I, the



She has performed the great feat of making a critic cry

This young daughter of Stageland believes that every actress should have a method and not be just herself

actress, they like, but rather the part I happen to be lucky with, in some play they're willing to see twice."

Perhaps we, out in front, know a trifle better than that.

The Auction Block

A STORY OF STAGE LIFE AND A YOUNG GIRL'S SACRIFICE

By Rex Beach

Author of "The Spoilers," "The Ne'er-do-Well," "Rope's End," etc.

Illustrated by Charles Dana Gibson

SYNOPSIS—The removal of the Knight family from Vale to New York city, after Peter's defeat in local politics, is necessary in order that he may accept a minor clerkship in a city department, but is desired by Mrs. Knight and the good-for-nothing son, Jim, chiefly as an opportunity for the advancement of the beautiful daughter, Lorelei, who, they imagine, can go on the stage and easily make a rich marriage. Before long, Lorelei finds herself burdened with the entire support of the family, since the father is crippled by an accident and the brother will not work. The girl's beauty has attracted attention in the chorus, and at the end of two years, having been promoted to a small speaking part in one of Bergman's Revues, she is interviewed by Campbell Pope, a critic, as one of the reigning theatrical favorites. Through her dressing-roommate, Lilas Lynn, Lorelei makes acquaintances among men powerful in the steel industry. These include Jarvis Hammon, who is befriending Lilas; John T. Merkle, a cynical and dyspeptic bachelor, but a man of high moral principles; Hannibal Wharton, and his dissipated son, Bob. She resents the latter's attentions, but this does not prevent his turning up constantly at the theater and annoying her with invitations to supper. The girl finds a real woman friend in Adorée Demorest, whose unenviable reputation has been manufactured for exploitation on the vaudeville stage. Adorée is really a good-hearted, simple-natured woman.

Hammon's infatuation for Lilas threatens the steel man's business interests as well as his home, and Lorelei goes to Merkle when she learns that a plot is being hatched against Hammon, with which Max Melcher, a friend of Lilas and a power in the underworld life of Broadway, is connected. To her distress, Lorelei discovers that her brother is an associate of Melcher. By mere accident, Lorelei and Merkle appear at a motoring-resort, one night, just as a flash-light photograph has been taken of Hammon and Lilas together at supper. The magnate is sure the occurrence will lead to blackmail or worse. In fact, Lilas is looking forward to a day of reckoning with Hammon. She wishes to avenge the death of her father, sacrificed to the god of greed in a steel-mill where Hammon, before his rise to wealth, was foreman.

Merkle and Lorelei figure in the story as it appears in certain newspapers. Melcher starts action against Hammon on the ground that Lilas is his wife, and the magnate promptly settles. His own wife begins divorce proceedings. Jim Knight and his mother call on Merkle and ask for money—or marriage with Lorelei. This act determines Lorelei to leave home, and she takes a modest apartment in the house in which Hammon has established Lilas amid luxurious surroundings.

Jim Knight and Melcher now plot to marry Lorelei to Bob Wharton. A supper-party, consisting of Lorelei, Lilas, Jim, and Bob, is arranged, and after Wharton is somewhat under the influence of liquor, Jim suddenly announces that he has asked Lorelei to marry him. Bob declares this to be so, and finally overcomes the girl's objections. The four proceed immediately to Hoboken, where the ceremony is performed by a justice of the peace. They return to Lilas's apartment to celebrate, when Hammon unexpectedly appears. He is furious with Lilas for her part in the marriage of his friend's son with what he calls a blackmailer. Lilas continues the quarrel, reveals herself as her father's avenger, and finally shoots Hammon. There were no witnesses, Jim and Bob having disappeared into Lorelei's apartment, while Lorelei remains in another room. Lorelei phones for Merkle, and he and Bob succeed in getting the wounded man to his home without notice. Bob bribing a cabby and taking his place on the box. Hammon insists that he shot himself accidentally. Preparations are made for Lilas to sail for Europe that very day.

Hammon dies, and Hannibal Wharton comes to New York. As soon as possible he sees Bob and denounces Lorelei and her family as blackmailers who have trapped the boy and offers to buy his release. A violent scene follows, in which Bob defends his wife, and the father cuts off his allowance. Lorelei agrees to stick to her husband as long as he keeps away from drink and leads a straight life. She finds the hardest task of her life in keeping him sober. Bob has one serious lapse due to the intriguing of Jim, who, with his mother, is bent on separating the couple, since the husband is penniless. Bob gets a small position with a Wall Street office, but loses it through his father's influence. Finally, by chance, on the strength of a wager, he has an opportunity of getting his friends as customers for his tailor and makes a considerable amount of money as commissions. The outlook now seems more promising, and Lorelei gives up the theater.

After a most unpleasant experience at a week-end party among Bob's friends, Lorelei runs away, but a reconciliation is effected through Pope and Adorée, who have become interested in each other. Lorelei's discovery of approaching maternity helps in this. Jim Knight reveals the secret of Hammon's death to Melcher. Lilas is brought back, and, with the connivance of a corrupt police official, an organized scheme of blackmail is worked upon Merkle and Bob. The latter has prospered, and is now a partner in the tailoring establishment. So he pays at first, on account of Lorelei's condition, but the demands of the conspirators finally reach the sum of one hundred thousand dollars. Merkle appeals to a prominent politician, and the police scatter the blackmailers. Lilas is ordered to leave town. Deciding to kill Melcher before she goes, she takes an overdose of cocaine to nerve herself to the act, and dies.

LATE that night, John Merkle telephoned Bob Wharton to say, "Headquarters just rang me up and told me—prepare yourself for a shock—Lilas Lynn is dead." "Dead!" Bob cried, in a startled voice. "Dead! How? When did it happen? I can't believe it."

Merkle made known the details that had come to him.

"Looks like suicide, but they're not sure. Anyhow, she took too much dope of some sort. You can sleep easy now. I wish I could."

"I suppose it's the law of compensation." "Compensation?" Merkle's voice sounded querulous. "There's no such thing. Don't talk to a Wall Street man about the law of compensation."

"Well, then, call it providence."

"Providence has too much on its hands to bother with people like her. No; there is a certain—well, immovability about the conventional, and Lilas wasn't strong enough to topple it over."

"I—I'm shocked, of course, and yet I can't help feeling greatly relieved. Rotten thing to say——"

"Not at all; I'm delighted."

"Once I read about a flare-back on a battle-ship, and how a fellow threw himself into the door of the powder-magazine to prevent an explosion. That's me! I'm nearly scorched to death."

Bob's anxiety had been so intense of late that this unexpected solution of his difficulties seemed, indeed, nothing less than a godsend. Lorelei, thank heaven, had been saved from any knowledge of the affair, and when he went down to business it was with a lighter heart than he had felt for some time. Bob's acquaintance with Lilas Lynn had been far from pleasant; she had repaid his kindness with treachery, and now, although he was not a callous person, he could not pretend that his pity exceeded his relief. His regrets at the girl's tragic end were those which any normal man would have felt at the death of an acquaintance, but they were far overbalanced, now, by his joy at the fact that no further shadows menaced the peace of his wife and that once again the future was all dancing sunshine.

Bob had seldom been conscious of a deliberate effort to please himself, for to want a thing had always meant to have it almost before the desire had been recognized. The gratification of his impulses had become a sort of second nature to him, and now, feeling that he owed a debt of friendliness to the world, he was impelled to liquidate it.

He did struggle half-heartedly against his first drink, but after he had taken it and after other drinks had gone the way of the first, he was troubled less and less by the consciousness of broken resolves. He met a number of people whom he liked and to whom he was inspired to show his liking, and, strange to say, the more he drank the more of such friends he discovered. By late afternoon he was in a fantastically jubilant mood, and, seizing Kurtz, he bore him across the way to Delmonico's.

Now, Kurtz was worldly and therefore tolerant. He had grown to like and to understand his young associate very well

indeed, and something about Bob's riotous disposition to gladness awoke a response in the little tailor.

It was that expansive and expensive hour of the afternoon when business worries are dropped and before social cares are shouldered. It was cocktail-time along the Avenue, the hour when spees are born and engagements broken, and, as it lengthened, Wharton celebrated it as in days gone by. His last regret had vanished; he was having a splendid time when a page called him to a telephone-booth.

Adorée's voice greeted him; she was speaking from his own home, and her first words almost sobered him. Something was wrong; Bob was needed quickly; Lorelei was asking for him. For more than an hour they had been vainly trying to locate him. They had succeeded in reaching the doctor, and he was there—with a nurse. Adorée's voice broke—probably it was nothing serious, but Lorelei was frightened and so was the speaker. Bob had better waste no time, for—one never could tell what might happen in cases of this sort.

When Bob lurched out of the booth he was white; the noisy group he had left rose in alarm at sight of his stricken face. His legs led him a crooked course out of the café, bringing him into collision with chairs and tables, and causing him to realize, for the first time, how far he had allowed himself to go. In a shaking voice he called for a taxi-cab, meanwhile allowing the raw air of the street to cool his head.

But as he was hurried up the Avenue his fright grew until he lost himself in a dizzy, drunken panic. He tried to lay hold of himself, but his thoughts were as unruly as his legs had been. The significance of his conduct and its probable effect upon his wife filled him with horror. Fate had cunningly timed her punishment. Before long he began to attribute this catastrophe, whatever it might prove to be, directly to his own criminal behavior, and for once in his care-free life he knew the taste of bitter regret. But he could not think coherently; black fears were pouring in upon him with a speed to match the staggering objects that fled past his open cab window.

The terror of the unknown was upon him. What if Lorelei should die? Bob asked himself. A swing of the vehicle flung him into a corner, where he huddled, slack-jawed, staring. He was unable to shut out

this last suggestion. If Lorelei died, he would be her murderer; that was plain. He had wanted a child, to be sure, but until this moment he had never counted the risk or realized what price might be exacted. No child could be worth a risk to Lorelei.

But regrets were unavailing. Something had gone wrong, and Lorelei needed him. She was calling for him, and he was drunk. He would reel up to her bed of pain with bleared eyes, with poisoned lips. How could he kiss her? How could he explain?

The cab swung into the curb and he scrambled out, then stumbled blindly up the steps and into the building where he lived.

Adorée met him at his own door. Lorelei's summons had evidently found the dancer dressed for anything except such a crisis, for Miss Demorest was arrayed in the very newest importation. The lower half of her figure was startlingly suggestive of the harem, while above the waist she was adorned like a Chinese princess. A tango-cap of gold crowned her swirls of hair, and from it depended a string of tremendous beads, looped beneath her chin. She presented a Futurist combination of colors, mainly mandarin yellow and royal blue, both of which, in some peculiar way, seemed to extend upward, tinging her cheeks. But Wharton's impression was vague; he saw little more than the tragic widening of the girl's eyes as she recognized his condition.

"Am I as bad as that?" he stammered. "Do you think she'll notice it?"

"Oh, Bob!" Adorée cried, in a stricken voice. "How could you—at this time?"

"You said she wanted me. I couldn't take time—"

"Yes; she has been calling for you, but I'm sorry I found you."

A silent-footed figure in a nurse's uniform emerged from the dining-room, and her first expression of relief at sight of Bob changed swiftly to a stare of startled wonderment. Bob was not too drunk to read the half-spoken protest on her lips. Then he heard his wife calling him and realized that somehow she knew of his coming. At the sound of her voice, strangely throaty and hoarse from pain, the strength ran out of his body. The doctor heard him fumbling at the bedroom door and admitted him; then a low, aching cry of disappointment sounded,

and Adorée Demorest bowed her head upon her arms.

When Bob groped his way back into the living-room his look was ghastly; his face was damp; his eyes were desperate.

"She sent me away," he whispered.

"Poor thing!" He winced at Adorée's tone. "God! I heard her when she saw you. I wonder if you realize—"

"Oh, yes," he nodded, slowly; "I don't get drunk all over, like most men. I'm afraid I'll never forget that cry."

He was trembling, and his terror was so pitiful that Adorée laid a compassionate hand upon his shoulder.

"Don't let go, Bob. Hold your thoughts steady and sober up. We must all help."

"Tell me—you know about these things—tell me honestly—"

"What do I know about such things? What can I tell you?" bitterly cried the dancer. "I don't know anything about babies. I never even held one in my arms. I'm worse frightened than you are."

Darkness found Bob huddled in his chair, fighting for his senses, but as the liquor died in him terrible fancies came to life. Those muffled cries of pain rising now and then terrorized him, and yet the long intervals of silence between were worse, for then it seemed to him that the fight must be going against his wife and that her strength must be proving insufficient. There were times, too, when he felt the paralyzing conviction that he was alone in the house, and more than once he stole down the hall, his heart between his teeth, his body shaking in a palsy of apprehension.

A frightened maid began preparations for his dinner, but he ordered her away. Then, when she brought him a tray, anger at the thought that his own comfort should be considered of consequence made him refuse to touch it.

At length, his inactivity became unbearable, and, feeling the desperate need of sane counsel, he telephoned to John Merkle. Bob was too deeply agitated to more than note the banker's statement that Mr. and Mrs. Hannibal Wharton were in the city, but, recalling it later, he experienced a stab of regret that his mother was not here to comfort Lorelei in the first great crisis of her womanhood. It had been Lorelei's wish that her own mother be kept in ignorance of the truth, and now, therefore, the girl had no one to lean upon except an



DRAWN BY CHARLES DANA GIBSON

Hannibal looked up to find his wife standing over him with face strangely humble. Her eyes were appealing; her frail figure was shaking wretchedly

unpractical stage-woman—and a drunken husband. In Bob's mind the pity of it grew as the time crept on.

But Adorée Demorest was wonderful. Despite her inexperience she was calm, capable, sympathetic, and, best of all, her normality afforded a support upon which both the husband and the wife could rest. When she finally made herself ready for the street, Bob cried piteously,

"You're not going to leave us?"

"I must. It's nearly theater-time," she told him. "It's one of the penalties of this business that nothing must hold the curtain; but I'll be back the minute the show is over."

"Lorelei needs you."

Adorée nodded; her eyes met Bob's squarely, and he saw that they were wet. Her face was tender, and in spite of her grotesquely affected *toilette*, she appeared very simple and womanly at this moment. Her absurd theatricalism was gone; she was a natural, unaffected young woman.

"I wish I could do something to help," wearily continued Bob, but Adorée shook her head so violently that the barbaric beaded festoon beneath her chin clicked and rattled.

"She knows you're close by—that's enough. This is a poor time to preach, but—it seems to me if you've got a bit of real manhood in you, Bob, you'll never drink again. The shock of seeing you like this—when she needed you—didn't help her any."

"I know! I know!" The words were wrung from him like a groan. "But the thing is bigger and stronger than I am. It takes both of us to fight it. If she should—leave me, I'd never pull through, and—I wouldn't want to."

Never until she left Lorelei's house and turned toward the white lights of Broadway, did Adorée Demorest fully realize whither her theatrical career had carried her. Lorelei, it seemed to her now, had lived to high purpose; she was soon to be a mother. But as for herself—the dancer cringed at the thought. What had her life brought? Notoriety—shame. In the eyes of men she was abominable. She had sold herself for the satisfaction of seeing a false name blazoned in electric lights, while Lorelei had played the game differently and won. Yes, she would have won even though she died to-night. But how could a woman

like Adorée Demorest, "The King's Favorite," "The Woman with the Rubies," hope for wifehood or for motherhood? The bitterness of these reflections lay in the fact that Adorée knew herself to be pure. But the world considered her evil, and evil in its eyes she would remain. How could she hope to bring anything but misery to a husband or bequeath anything but shame to a child? At this moment, she would gladly have changed places with that other girl whose life hung in the scales.

John Merkle had never lost interest in Lorelei, or forgotten her refusal of his well-meant offer of assistance. From the night of their first meeting, she had intrigued his interest, and her marriage to Bob had deepened his friendly feeling. Although he prided himself upon a reputation for harsh cynicism and cherished the conviction that he was wholly without sentiment, he was, in reality, more emotional than he believed, and Lorelei's courageous efforts to regenerate her husband, her vigorous determination to build respectability and happiness out of the unpromising materials at her hand had excited his liveliest sympathy. It pleased him to read into her character beauties and nobilities of which she was utterly unconscious if not actually devoid. Now that she had come to a serious crisis, Merkle's slowly growing resentment at Bob's parents for refusing to recognize her burst into anger. The result was that, soon after his talk with Bob, he telephoned Hannibal Wharton, making known the situation in the most disagreeable and biting manner of which he was capable. Strange to say, Wharton heard him through, then thanked him before ringing off.

When Hannibal had repeated the news to his wife, she moved slowly to a window and stood there, staring down into the glittering chasm of Fifth Avenue. Bob's mother was a frail, erect, impassive woman, wearied and saddened with the weight of her husband's millions. There had been a time when society knew her, but of late years she saw few people, and her name was seldom mentioned except in connection with her benefactions. Even the true satisfaction of giving had been denied her, since real charity means sacrifice. Wealth had lent her a painful conspicuousness and had made her a target for multifarious demands so insistent, so ill considered, so unworthy

—many of them—that she had been forced into an isolation more strict, even, than her husband's.

Great responsibilities had changed Hannibal Wharton into a machine; he had become mechanical, even in his daily life, in his pleasures, in his relaxations. His suspicions and his dislikes were also more or less automatic, but in all his married life he had never found cause to complain of anything his wife had done. He was serenely conscious, moreover, of her complete accord with his every action, and now, therefore, in reporting Merkle's conversation, he spoke musingly, as a man speaks to himself.

"John loves to be caustic; he likes to vocalize his dyspepsia," the old man muttered. "Well, if it's as serious as he seems to think, we may be spared the disgrace of a grandchild." Mrs. Wharton did not stir; there was something uncompromising in the rigid lines of her back and in her stiffly poised head. "People of her kind always have children," he continued, "and that's what I told Bob. I told him he was laying up trouble for himself."

"Bob had more to him than we thought," irrelevantly murmured the mother.

"More than we thought?" Hannibal shook his head. "Not more than I thought. I knew he had it in him; you were the one——"

"No, no! We both doubted. Perhaps this girl read him."

"Sure she read him!" snorted the father. "She read his bank-book. But I fooled her."

"Do you remember when Bob was born?"

"Eh?"

"Do you remember? I had trouble, too."

Into Hannibal's eyes came a slow and painful light of reminiscence.

"The doctor thought——"

"Of course I remember!" her husband broke in. "Those doctors said you'd never come through it."

"Yes; I wasn't strong."

"But you did. I was with you. I fought for you. I wouldn't let you die. Remember it?" The speaker moistened his lips. "Why, I never forgot!"

"Bob is experiencing something like that to-night."

Hannibal started; then he fumbled uncertainly for a cigar. When he had it lighted he said gruffly, "Well, it made a man of me; I hope it'll help Bob."

Still staring out across the glowing lights and the mysterious, inky blots that lay below her, Mrs. Wharton went on: "You are thinking only of Bob, but that girl is suffering all I suffered that night, and I'm thinking of her, too. She is offering her life for the life of a little child, just as I offered mine."

There was a silence; then Hannibal looked up to find his wife standing over him with face strangely humble. Her eyes were appealing; her frail figure was shaking wretchedly.

"My dear!" he cried, rising.

"I can't keep it up, Hannibal. I can't pretend any longer. It's Bob's baby and it's ours——" Disregarding his denial, she ran on, swiftly: "I wanted more children, but I couldn't have them, so I've starved myself all these years. You can't understand, but I'm lonely, Hannibal, terribly lonely and sad. Bob grew up and went away, and all we had left was money. The dollars piled up; year by year they grew heavier and heavier until they squeezed our lives dry and crowded out everything. They even crowded out our son and—spoiled him. They made you into a stone man; they came between me and the people and the things I loved; they walled me off from the world. My life is empty—empty. I want to mother something."

Hannibal inquired hoarsely: "Not this baby, surely? Not that woman's child?"

"It's Bob's baby—and ours."

He looked down at her queerly for a moment.

"The breed is rotten. If he had married a decent girl——"

"John Merkle says she is splendid."

"How do you know?"

"I have talked with him. I have learned whatever I could about her, wherever I could, and it's all good. After all, Bob loves her, and isn't that enough?"

"But she doesn't love him," stormed the father. "She said she didn't. She wants his money, and she thinks she'll get it this way."

"Do you think money can pay her for what she is enduring at this minute? She's frightened, just as I was frightened when Bob was born. She's sick and suffering. But do you think all our dollars could buy that child from her? Money has made us hard, Hannibal; let's—be different."

"I'm afraid we have put it off too long,"

he answered slowly. "She won't forgive us, and I'm not sure I want her to."

"Bob's in trouble. Won't you go to him?"

Hannibal Wharton opened his lips, closed them; then, taking his hat and coat, he left the room.

But as the old man went up-town his nerve failed him. He was fixed in his ways; he had a blind faith in his own infallibility. Twice he rode up in the elevator to his son's door; twice he rode down again. The hall-man informed him that the crisis had not passed; so, finding the night air not uncomfortable, Hannibal settled himself to wait. After all, he told himself, this was not the moment for a painful reconciliation.

As time dragged on, he came to a reckoning with his conscience, and his meditations brought home the realization that, despite his success, despite the love and companionship of his wife, he, too, was growing old and lonely.

During the chill, still hours after the city had gone to rest, an automobile drew up to the apartment-house; when its expected passenger emerged from the building, a grim-faced stranger in a greatcoat accosted him. One glance challenged the physician's attention, and he answered:

"Yes; it's all over. A boy."

"And—Mrs. Wharton, the mother?"

"Youth is a wonderful thing, and she has everything to live for. She is doing as well as could be expected. You're a relative, I presume?"

The old man hesitated, then his voice came boldly. "Yes; I'm her father."

When the doctor had driven away, Hannibal strode into the building and telephoned to his hotel, but now his words were short and oddly broken. Nevertheless they brought a light of gladness to the eyes of the woman who had waited all these hours.

XXIX

ADORÉE DEMOREST, still in her glittering, hybrid costume, but heavy-limbed and dull with fatigue, paused outside her own door early that morning. The time lacked perhaps an hour of dawn, the street outside and the building itself were silent, yet from Adorée's parlor issued the sound of light fingers upon piano keys. Adorée entered, to find Campbell Pope, with collar loosened and hair on end, seated at the instrument.

The air within the room was blue and reeking with the odor of stale tobacco smoke, and the ash-receiver at his elbow was piled high with burnt offerings, one of which was now sending an evil-smelling streamer toward the ceiling.

Pope rose at Adorée's entrance, eyeing her anxiously.

"Is everything all right?" he cried.

"Is what all right?"

"The—Lorelei."

"Oh, yes! What are you doing here?"

"I suppose I must apologize. You see, I heard the news and came here after the show. When I learned where you were, I decided to wait and—help."

"You decided to—help?" Adorée eyed the disheveled musician queerly. "By smelling up my parlor and playing my poor piano all night—is that how you help? What do you mean, 'help'?"

The critic appeared to realize for the first time the lateness of the hour. Glancing at his watch, he gasped:

"Why, I had no idea it was this time! I've been here all night, haven't I? You see, after I got in I was afraid to go out without explaining."

"What do you mean by saying you wanted to help?" Miss Demorest repeated curiously. "You've helped to break my lease. I'll be thrown out of this house, sure."

Pope stammered, guiltily, "I was playing for Bob and Lorelei."

With one glove half off, Adorée slowly seated herself, showing in her face an amazement that increased the man's embarrassment.

"I knew it was a serious matter," he explained, "and, being terribly fond of Bob and Lorelei, I naturally wanted to do what I could."

"Yes; go on."

Pope took a deeper breath, then burst out: "Oh, I have a sixty-horse-power imagination, and it seems to me that music is a sort of—prayer; anyhow it's the only way I know of praying. Good music is divine language; it's what the angels speak, if there are any angels. Sometimes it seems to me that I can soar heavenward on the wings of—of melody and get close enough to make myself heard. In my own way I was sort of praying for those two children. Foolish, isn't it? I'm sorry I told you. It sounds nutty to me when I stop to consider it." Pope stirred uneasily under Adorée's



DRAWN BY CHARLES DANA GIBSON

Lorelei reached forth and drew Adorée down to her, whispering: "I'm so glad, dear. I knew he would end by loving you, for everybody does"

gravely speculative eyes. "Lorelei's all right?"

Adorée nodded. "It's a boy." There was a moment of silence. "Did you ever see a brand-new baby?"

"Lord, no!"

Miss Demorest's gaze remained bent upon Pope, but it was focused upon great distances; her voice when she spoke was hushed and awestricken. "Neither did I until this one. I held it. I held it in my arms. Oh—I was frightened, and yet I seemed to know just what to do and—and everything. It was strange. It hurt me terribly, for, you see, I didn't know what babies meant until to-night. Now, I know."

Pope saw the shining eyes suddenly fill and threaten to overflow; instead of the grotesquely overdressed and artificial stage favorite, he beheld only a yearning woman whose face was softened and glorified as by a vision.

"Poor Lorelei!" he murmured, at a loss for words.

"Poor Lorelei!" Adorée's lips twisted mirthlessly. "Of course you don't understand. How could you? Why, it's *her* baby. She's a mother. I can hold it once in a while; she can hold it always."

"I didn't know you cared for children."

Adorée shrugged; the beads at her throat clicked barbarously. "Neither did I, but I suppose every woman does if she only knew it. To-night, I began to understand what this ache inside of me means." Her gaze came back and centered upon his face, but it was frightened and panic-stricken now. "I've sacrificed my right to children."

"How can you say—"

"Oh, you know it as well as I do!" A flush wavered in the speaker's cheeks, then fled, leaving her white and weary. "You, of all men, must understand. I'm notorious. I'm a painted woman, a wicked woman—the wickedest woman in the land—and that reputation will live in spite of anything I can do." She began to cry, now, in a way strange to Pope's experience, for her tears appeared, grew, and spilled themselves slowly down her cheeks, and she made no attempt to hide them. The sight depressed him dreadfully, for, at heart, he was intensely sentimental. "I didn't know what it means to be notorious," she stated tensely. "I didn't know what I was doing when I agreed to be 'Adorée Demorest.'"

Pope's habitual restraint all at once gave

way. "Nonsense!" he exploded. "The thing that counts is what you are, not what you seem to be. I know the truth; I don't care what people say."

Now, there was nothing sufficiently significant about these words to bring a light of wonderment and gladness to the girl's face, but her tears ceased as abruptly as they had commenced, and, noting the slowly growing radiance of her expression, Campbell was stricken dumb with fright at the possible consequences of temerity. The knowledge of his shortcomings robbed him of confidence and helped to confuse him.

Adorée rose; she removed her tango-cap and the mantle elaborately draped from one shoulder that served as an evening wrap; then, with a lingering backward glance, she disappeared into her chamber. She bathed her eyes, powdered her cheeks, patted her hair into more becoming fashion, gave a final dab of the puff upon her nose, as an expert billiard-player chalks his cue. When she had quite finished she returned to the critic, who, meanwhile, had remained frozen in his tracks. For a moment she stood looking up at him with a peculiar, tender smile, then took him by the lapels of his shapeless coat and drew his thin face down to hers.

"I'm not going to let you back out," she declared firmly. "You asked me, didn't you?"

"Adorée! No, no! Think what you are doing!" he cried sharply.

But she continued to smile up into his eyes with a gladness that intoxicated him.

She snuggled closer to him, murmuring cozily: "I don't want to think—we'll have plenty of time to think when we're too old to talk. Now, I just want to love you as hard as you have been loving me for the last six months."

During the days of Lorelei's recovery, Bob Wharton was in a peculiarly exultant mood. Her ready forgiveness of his behavior did much to renew his faith in himself, besides doubling his devotion to her. He did not feel that he could ever learn to love her any more than he did, for, at times, the strength of his passion frightened him, but her allowance for his weakness brought them into closer touch with each other and kindled in him an aching humility that craved self-sacrifice. Dwarfing these and kindred emotions, however, was a feeling

altogether new which had come with the birth of his son. At first, the baby awed and frightened Bob; it oppressed him with a sense of tremendous responsibility, but on the heels of this came a dawning pride and then an insatiable curiosity. He began to spend a great deal of time with the infant; he studied it; he stared at it; when no one was looking he felt of the little fellow gingerly, and would have enjoyed examining it minutely had he dared. His hands itched for it, and its weak, strangling gurgles sent indescribable thrills through him. The easy dexterity with which the nurse handled it—as if the precious atom were a bundle of rags—excited Bob's liveliest apprehension, and at such times he hovered near by, poised upon tiptoe, for fear she might drop it. He felt that it should be borne on silken cushions while heads were bowed and backs bent rather than upon the hip or in the crook of a careless elbow. When he ventured to voice this feeling to his wife, he was offended at her amusement, and for a whole day tortured himself with the suspicion that the child's mother did not truly love it.

To all young fathers there comes a certain readjustment of values. To Bob, who had always led a selfish, thoughtless existence, it was at first bewildering to discover that his place at the head of his household had been usurped by another. Heretofore he had always been of supreme domestic importance, but now the order of things was completely reversed, if not hopelessly jumbled. First in consequence came this new person, tiny and vastly tyrannical because of its helplessness, then the nurse, an awesome person—a sort of oracle and regent combined—who ruled in the name and stead of the new heir. Nurse's wisdom was unbounded; her lightest wish was law, and next to her in authority was a fat, bearded prime minister who daily came and went in an automobile and who wrote edicts on a little pad. This person's frown threw the entire establishment into confusion. Lorelei herself occupied no mean station in the new scheme, for at least she shared the confidence of the nurse and the doctor and ranked above the cook and the housemaid, but not so Bob. Somewhere at the foot of the list he found his own true place.

Now, strange to say, this novel arrangement was extremely agreeable to the deposed ruler. Bob took a shameless delight in doing menial service; to fetch and to

carry for all hands filled him with joy. But once outside of the premises, he reasserted himself, and his importance grew as gas expands; he swelled to the bursting-point; he strutted; he grinned; he was broadly tolerant, and more than once he startled total strangers by laughing hilariously at nothing. When he could not talk he whistled in tune to the singing voices within him. But it was seldom indeed that he could not talk, and before long his intimate friends began to avoid him like a plague. It was his partner, Kurtz, who finally dubbed him "The Pestilence that talketh in darkness and the Destruction that wasteth our noondays."

Scarcely less interested in the new baby was Campbell Pope. Pope, in fact, was becoming interested in almost everything of late. He was growing youthful, too, in a way that vaguely alarmed his acquaintances. His cynicism was disappearing; his dramatic reviews began to assume a commendatory tone that all but destroyed their journalistic value.

When Lorelei had recovered sufficiently to receive visitors, the two lovers appeared one afternoon laden with packages.

"We've been shopping for the baby," Adorée explained, as she began to unload herself; and Pope announced enthusiastically that the experience had been the most exciting of an adventurous lifetime. Both of them, it seemed, had given free rein to their extravagance, for to begin with there was a marvelous locomotive that ran on a circular track, slightly too large to fit any room in the apartment. It was no ordinary tin toy; it had a bell that rang and a whistle that tooted and a queer little painted manikin inside the cab. There were, moreover, a station, a bridge, and a frowning mountain range pierced by a tunnel. All in all, the outfit weighed perhaps sixty pounds and required the operating skill of a practical mechanic.

And it proved to be a dangerous plaything, too, for once it had been thoroughly wound up and set in motion, it developed an unsuspected and terrifying energy. Bob subdued it only after it had completed a speed-trial down the hall, in the course of which it substantially damaged base-board and plaster.

Pope's taste ran to mechanical contrivances; among his contributions there were, in addition to this public nuisance, an

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automobile, a camera, a bowling-alley, and a set of small carpenter's tools, the mere sight of which brought out a sweat of apprehension upon the baby's father. Adorée, on the other hand, had invested heavily in animals; her gifts included a roaring lion, a peacock with a lease-breaking voice, an elephant that walked, accompanied by strange, whirring, abdominal sounds, besides many other strange products of the toy-makers' fancy. There was a huge doll which Miss Demorest had purchased because of its resemblance to herself and which was promptly christened "Aunt Adorée;" there were an ermine coat and a toy theater, also a full-morocco set of "Lives of Famous Musicians," in six volumes, this being an afterthought of Pope's, who feared the effects of Bob's low musical tastes upon a tender child. In addition to all these there was an elaborate enameled baby's bed with garlands of bisque flowers and a *point d'esprit* canopy. This, Adorée's sad-faced footman had held upon the front of the automobile during an embarrassing trip up Fifth Avenue and Riverside Drive.

During the examination of these interesting objects, the lovers made known their happiness; then, after the customary felicitations, Adorée explained: "Everything is arranged. We are going to be quietly married at once— I'm afraid he'll get away from me if I put it off——"

"Not a chance!" Pope's sallow face colored happily.

"As soon as I finish my theatrical contract," Adorée ran on, "we are going to drop quietly out of sight and stay out of sight."

"Going to live abroad?" Bob inquired.

"Worse!" Pope explained. "Long Island. We're going to raise ducks."

"Ducks!" Adorée echoed beatifically. "Hundreds and thousands of ducks! Little ducks and big ducks, fuzzy ones and smooth ones. Campbell can write plays, and I'll wear kimonos and be comfortable. It's wonderful to think about, isn't it?"

Pope supplemented her eagerly. "I'm looking for a bungalow on salt water, with a south exposure for the brooder-houses. Say, we're going to *live*! I tell you, Bob, there's money in ducks. I'm reading up on the subject. My dear fellow, do you realize that——" He swung into his pet subject so swiftly that Bob could not head

him off and was forced to listen somewhat dazedly.

Lorelei reached forth and drew Adorée down to her, whispering: "I'm so glad, dear. I knew he would end by loving you, for everybody does."

Pope concluded a lengthy harangue by saying: "My mistake last year was in the food. Ducks need soft food."

"Listen!" Bob raised a hand and nodded in the direction of the girls. "They're discussing that very subject."

"Top milk, indeed!" Adorée was crying indignantly. "Ours will have cream when they want it, and lots of it, too."

"My dear! It will be fatal." Lorelei was horrified. "Use nothing but top milk and barley-water. Be sure to sterilize the bottles and soak the nipples in borax——"

"Say!" Campbell Pope flushed painfully and rose to his feet. "They're not talking ducks. Women haven't the least delicacy, have they? Let's go out and smoke."

One day, after Bob had acquired sufficient confidence in himself and in the baby to handle it without anxiety to the nurse, he begged permission to show it to the hall-man down-stairs. He returned greatly elated, explaining that the attendant, who had some impossible number of babies of his own and might therefore be considered an authority, declared this one to be the finest he had ever beheld. Oddly enough, this praise delighted Bob out of all reason. He remained in a state of suppressed excitement all that day, and on the following afternoon he again kidnaped the child for a second exhibition. It seemed that the infant's fame spread rapidly, for soon the tenants of neighboring apartments began to clamor for a sight of it, and Bob was only too eager to gratify them. Every afternoon he took his son down-stairs with him, until finally Lorelei checked him as he was going out.

"Bob, dear," she said, with the faintest shadow of a smile. "I don't think it's good for him to go out so often. Why don't you ask your father and mother to come up?"

Bob flushed; then he stammered, "I— what makes you—er—think——"

"Why, I guessed it the very first day." Lorelei's smile saddened. "They needn't see me, you know."

Bob laid the child back in its bed. "But that's just what they want. They want to see you, only I wouldn't let you be bothered. They're perfectly foolish over the kid; mother cries, and father—but just wait." He rushed out of the room, and in a few moments returned with his parents.

Hannibal Wharton was deeply embarrassed, but his wife went straight to Lorelei and, bending over her chair, placed a kiss upon her lips. "There," said she. "When you are stronger I'm going to apologize for the way we've treated you. We're old people. We're selfish and suspicious and unreasonable, but we are not entirely inhuman. You won't be too hard on us, will you?"

The old lady's eyes were shining; the palms which were clasped over Lorelei's hand were hot and tremulous. The look of hungry yearning that greeted the elder woman's words was ample answer, and with a little choking cry she gathered the weak figure into her arms and thrilled as she felt the amber head upon her breast.

Hannibal trumpeted into his handkerchief, then cleared his throat premonitorily, but Bob forestalled him with a happy laugh. "Don't hold any post-mortems, dad. Lorelei knows everything you intend to say."

"I'm blamed if she does," rumbled the old man, "because I don't know myself. I'm not much on apologies; I can take 'em, but I can't make 'em." His voice rose sternly. "Young lady, the night that baby was born I stood outside this house for hours because I was afraid to come in. And my feet hurt like the devil, too. I wouldn't lose that much sleep for the whole steel trust; but I didn't dare go back to the hotel, for mother was waiting, and I was afraid of her, too. I don't intend to go through another night like that."

Bob's mother turned to her son, saying: "She *is* beautiful, and she is good, too. Anybody can see that. We could love her for what she has done for you, if for nothing else."

"Well, I should say so," proudly vaunted the son. "She took a chance when she didn't care for me, and she made me into a regular fellow. Why, she reformed me from the ground up. I've sworn off every blessed thing I used to do."

"Including drinking?" gruffly queried the father.

"Yes."

Lorelei smiled her slow, reluctant smile at the old couple, and her voice was gentle as she said: "He thinks he has, but it's hard to stop entirely, and you mustn't blame him if he forgets himself occasionally. You see, drinking is mostly a matter of temperament, after all. But he is doing splendidly, and some day, perhaps—"

They nodded understandingly.

"You'll try to like us, won't you,—for Bob's sake?" pleaded the old lady timidly.

"I intend to love you both very dearly," shyly returned the girl, and, noting the light in Lorelei's face, Bob Wharton was satisfied.

Restraint vanished swiftly under the old couple's evident determination to make amends, but after they had gone, Lorelei became so pensive that Bob said anxiously, "I hope you weren't polite to them merely for my sake."

Lorelei shook her head. "No. I was only thinking—Do you realize that none of my own people have been to see me? That I haven't had a single word from any of them?"

Bob stirred uncomfortably; he started to speak, then checked himself as she went on, not without some effort: "I'm going to say something unpleasant, but I think you ought to know it. When they learn that your parents have taken me in and made up with us, they're going to ask me for money. It's a terrible thing to say, but it's true."

"Do you want to see them? Do you want them to see the baby?"

"N-no." Lorelei was pale as she made answer. "Not after all that has passed."

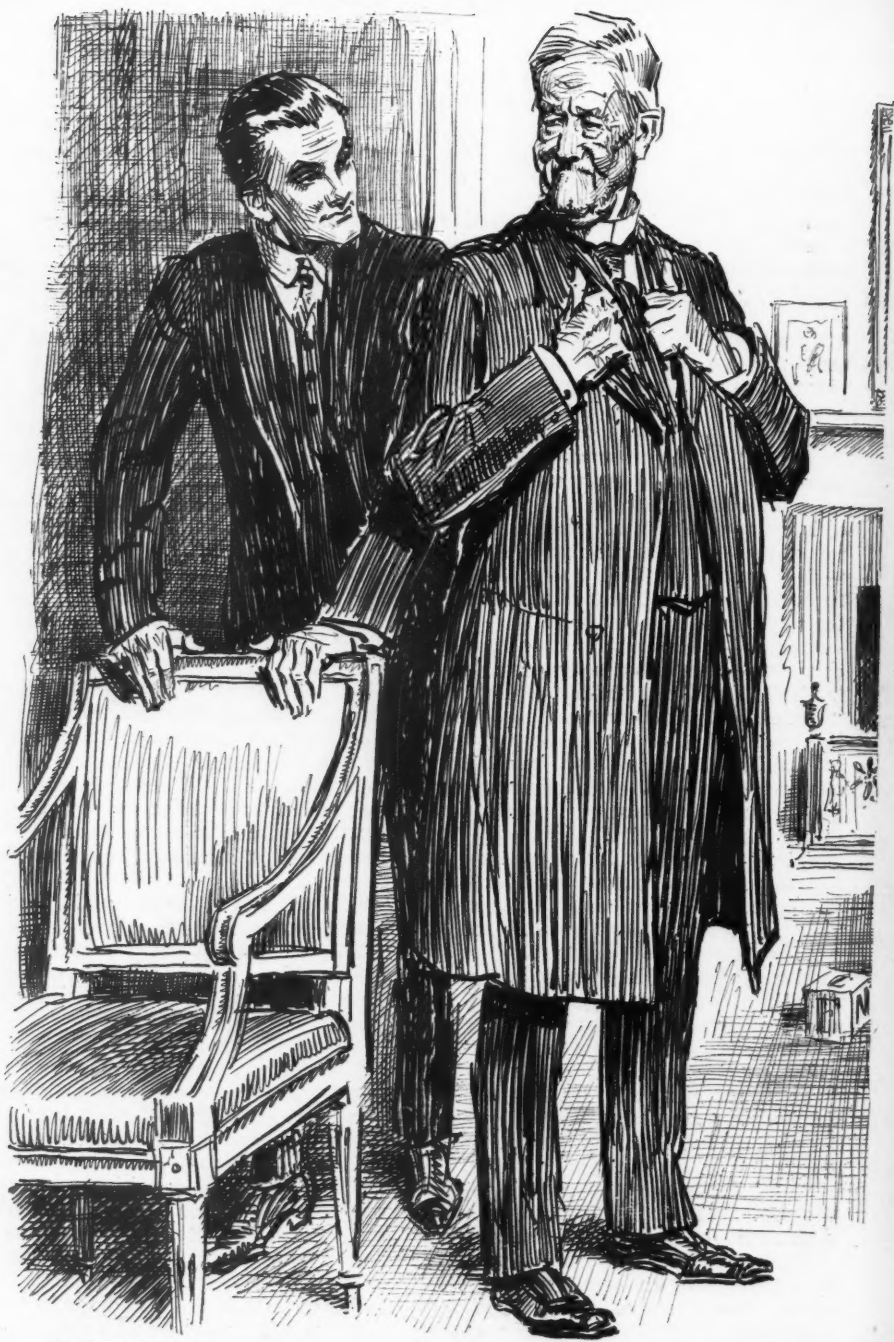
Bob heaved a grateful sigh. "I'm glad. They won't trouble you any more."

"Why? What—"

"I've been waiting until you were strong to tell you. I've noticed how their silence hurt you, but—it's my fault that they haven't been here. I sent them away."

"You sent them away?"

"Yes. I fixed them with money, and—they're happy at last. There's considerable to tell. Jim got into trouble with the police and finally sent for me. He told me everything and—it wasn't pretty. I'd rather not repeat all he said, but it opened my eyes and showed me why they brought you here, how they put you on the auction block, and how they cried for bids. He



DRAWN BY CHARLES DANA GIBSON

"Why, she reformed me from the ground up. I've sworn off every blessed thing



I used to do." "Including drinking?" gruffly queried the father. "Yes."

told me things you know nothing about and could never guess. When he had finished, I thanked God that they had flung you into my arms instead of—some other man's. It's a miracle that you weren't sacrificed utterly."

"Where is Jim now?"

"Somewhere in the boundless West. He gave me his promise to reform."

"He never will."

"Of course not, and I don't expect it of him. You see, I know how hard it is to reform."

"But mother and father?"

"I'm coming to them. My dad came around the day after our baby was born and shook hands. He wanted to stamp right in here and tell you what a fool he had made of himself, but I wouldn't stand for it. Finally, when he saw the kid, he blew up entirely, and right away proposed breaking ground for a jasper palace for the youngster. He wanted to build it in Pittsburgh where he could run in, going to and from business. Mother was just as foolish, too. Well, when I had my little understanding with Jim and learned the whole truth about your people, I realized that no matter where we went they would be a constant menace to our happiness unless they were provided for. It struck me that you had made a game fight for happiness, and I couldn't stand for anything to spoil it at the last minute. I went to mother and told her the facts, and she seemed to understand as well as I how you must feel in spite of all they had done; so we shook down the governor for an endowment."

"Bob! What do you mean?" Lorelei faltered in bewilderment.

"We asked him for a hundred thousand dollars and got it."

Lorelei gasped.

"He bellowed like a bull; he spat poison

like a cobra; he writhed like a bucket of eels, but we put it over."

"A hundred thousand dollars?" whispered the wife.

"To a penny. And it's in the bank to your credit. But I didn't stop there." Bob's voice hardened. "I went to your mother, and in your name I promised her the income from it so long, and only so long, as she and Peter stayed away from you. She accepted—rather greedily, I thought—and they have gone back to Vale. They have their old house, and I have their promise never to see you except upon your invitation. Of course you can go to them whenever you wish, but—they're happy, and I think we will be happier with them in Vale than in New York. I hope you don't object to my arrangement."

There was a long silence; then Lorelei sighed.

"You are a very good man, Bob. It was my dream to do something of this sort, but I could never have done it so well."

Her husband bent and kissed her tenderly.

"It wasn't all my doings; I had help. And you mustn't feel sad, for something tells me you're going to learn finally the meaning of a real mother's love."

"Yes—yes." The answer came dreamily, then as a fretful complaint issued from the crib at her side, Lorelei leaned forward and swiftly gathered the baby into her arms.

"Is he sick?" Bob questioned, in alarm.

"No, silly; he's only hungry."

There, in the gathering dusk, Bob Wharton looked on at a sight that never failed to thrill him strangely. In his wife's face was a beautiful content, and it seemed to him fitting indeed that this country girl who had come to the city in quest of life should end her search thus, with a baby at her breast.

THE END

Another Chambers Winner!

November Cosmopolitan will contain the first instalment of ***Athalie***, a story of love and mysticism by **Robert W. Chambers**. Cosmopolitan readers need not be told that a Chambers novel is a good novel. *They know*. Our own opinion is that ***Athalie*** is Mr. Chambers' best since "The Common Law." The illustrations will be supplied by **Frank Craig**, a newcomer to Cosmopolitan, but one who is sure to be enthusiastically welcomed.

The Melon-Cure in Coonville

By E. W. Kemble



I

"Dat am a hunk er mellun fo' shuah."



II

The girl: "Dat mellun am pizen wif Paris green! Yo' heah me?"



III

"Mammy, I'se pizened—oh, mammy!"



IV

"Ain't I de miracle-worker? Dat chile's done cured o' stealin' an' lameness."

